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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

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PIERRE JOYE — BELGIUM IN THE COMMON MARKET

ARNOLD KETTLE — DICKENS: THE NOVELIST AND THE PEOPLE

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Marxism Today

Vol. 7 No. 2

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Editorial Comments

DEEP international concern for the unity of the international Communist movement was reflected in the statement issued by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party at its mid-January meeting:

> "Any split would be a disastrous set-back to the international working class and the cause of peace. It is unthinkable to any Communist Party worthy of its name. On the contrary, the most urgent duty facing every Communist Party is to do everything in its power to restore the unity of the world Communist movement and resolve its differences in a principled fashion on the basis of Marxism-Leninism."

It emphasised that the basis of unity is the Statement of the 81 Parties, and, in a reasoned way, dealt with the differences of the British Party with the Chinese Communist Party on a number of issues.

The Executive of the Party took a clear stand in support of patient and serious preparation of a new international conference of Communist and Workers' Parties. But, at the same time, it emphasised that certain provisions were vital if the success of such a Conference was to be ensured.

In the first place, the present public polemic between Parties should stop and be replaced by serious international preparation for the Conference. In the second place, adequate time must be taken for its preparation:

> "We need as much preparation as is necessary calmly and in a Communist fashion to examine and weigh up honestly held differences, to assess how far, in fact, they exist and what are the possible lines of solution."

A Cosy Picture

The survey *Social Change in Britain* brings together a good deal of useful information from the 1961 census and other Government statistics. Its background and purpose are, however, mysterious. It dribbled out—rather than was published—towards the end of 1962 and was issued to the press and M.P.s, many of whom were angered by its contents.

In the decade between the 1951 and 1961 censuses the population of the U.K. increased by 2½ million. But the most striking demographic factor about Britain has been the continual drift towards the West Midlands and South Eastern counties. In Greater London the increasing population has exploded, leaping over the Green Belt and crowding into towns and villages as far away as Brighton, Reading, Luton and Colchester.

In these areas the number of houses built by private enterprise for sale has increased most. Herein lies a major cause of the growth of the nation's debt. The mortgage debt to the building societies rose from £1,582 million to £2,881 million between 1954 and 1961 (we are not told the amount by which mortgage interest increased, but it must have more than doubled) and the hire purchase debts incurred for the washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and televisions that filled the houses and cars standing outside them grew from £461 million to £927 million between 1955 and 1961.

To prove that things are getting better and better, we are told that the 23 million incomes below £500 p.a. after tax in 1949 had been nearly halved by 1961 and in the same period the number of incomes between £500 and £2,000 grew from 2,800,000 to 13,500,000. Presumably the source of these figures is the Inland Revenue and one must ask how much trust can be placed in conclusions derived from their statistics after the damning exposure of their limitations by Professor Titmuss in *Income Distribution and Social Change*.

The whole document builds up a cosy picture of "a swelling middle class, migrating when it can into outlying rural/suburban or small town areas round the great cities". In this Britain "primary poverty has been virtually abolished" and the "old distinction between wage and salary earners is getting harder to define".

The authors have chosen to ignore reports showing that every year nearly four million people have to seek aid from the National Assistance Board, while others with equal need are unwilling to submit to a means test. Nor do they appear to have heard about the growing number of homeless families who are in fact but a tiny fraction of the millions of inadequately housed families in the country.

The black spots in the otherwise cosy picture of the survey are the growth of crime, especially among young people, the deterioration of stan-

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dards of morality especially among the young and the stupendous increase in gambling on football pools, bingo and through betting shops. You cannot help feeling that the authors of the Survey really believe that crime, sex and gambling are vices to which the working class is more prone and that they retard the transformation of Britain into a completely middle-class society.

The gem of the document is the statement that gambling among what it calls "the newly affluent" is more probably a basic discontent with what has become very strongly an era of materialism, and this discontent expresses itself in a grasping after unearned wealth. Think how discontented our captains of industry and property developing plutocrats must be.

Perhaps one aim in all this is to create the idea that we are now sufficiently well off to look after ourselves. The increase since 1953 in the number of people contributing towards provident societies which pay for private hospital beds and treatment is attributed to growing affluence and not to the deterioration in the National Health Service brought about by Tory ministers wielding their economy axes.

But its main aim is to persuade us that "we've never had it better" and it is not without significance that it has been issued on the eve of a year which may well see another General Election. However, life has not only caught up with but it has overtaken Tory prosperity mythology, and with the rapidly lengthening dole queues, the millions paying extortionate rent for inadequate accommodation and the plight of larger numbers of old people it will take more than this survey to get Macmillan out of his difficulties.

Berliner Ensemble

The German Democratic Republic has always been treated with special spleen by "the West". But the latest ban on exchange visits by the Berliner Ensemble, and the Old Vic, goes beyond all previous incidents, both in viciousness and stupidity.

It is "because of the wall" we are told, as if any country anywhere any time had not the right and duty to control its own frontiers.

By all accounts, the Old Vic, especially its Lear, is an export of which we could be proud; and the Berliners will be deprived of one of the finest Shakespeare productions that Shakespeare's country has produced.

But the Old Vic will not grumble if we stress especially our *own* loss. The Berliner Ensemble was Brecht's own creation: the chosen vehicle through which the greatest dramatist of our age presented his own and other writers' masterpieces to the world; and at the same time developed a concept of acting and production largely original, and, many would say, particularly appropriate to the 20th century when Socialism is replacing capitalism throughout the world. We were able to appreciate this when the Ensemble was here in 1956.

Magnificently though his widow Helene Weigel and the company have preserved his legacy, there must, as the years go by, be some reduction of personal impact. What English audiences are missing can never be replaced.

This does seem to be widely understood, as the protests from Sir Michael Redgrave, George Devine ("unquestionably the finest theatre company in the world"), Sybil Thorndyke, Peter Daubeny and Osian Lewenstein clearly show. The *Evening Standard,* in a most effective leader, accuses the Government of giving in to pressure from Adenauer which in 1956 they were prepared to treat with contempt.

It does look as if this is a decision in which the reactionaries have over-reached themselves; and a vigorous campaign can reverse it. Certainly those whose attention was riveted, and whose heads and hearts were moved, with characteristic Brechtian equality by Mother Courage in 1956—and this was the effect even on those who knew no German—should make their feelings heard.

Lesser Fabians

The winter 1962 issue of *Our History,* quarterly publication of the History Group of the Communist Party, is an interesting short study by Eric Hobsbawm of the *Lesser Fabians* (Pamphlet No. 28, 1s. 6d.).

The Fabian Essays were first published in 1889 and have been reprinting on and off, ever since, though Hobsbawm rightly remarks that the book "like so many important books in the history of the socialist movement is more often referred to than read".

It is true as Marxists (and, incidentally, Edward Pease, the first official historian of the Fabian Society) always claimed that the Fabian Society's great "achievement" was to turn the British Labour movement away from Marx and towards reformism, and that, as Edward Bernstein, its founder, who knew the Fabians well acknowledged, they provided much of the ideological foundation of continental revisionism. But, as Hobsbawm correctly explains, the Fabians did not start off as a uniform gradualist reformist movement; they "only developed into one towards the end of the 1880's, largely under the

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influence of Sidney Webb and his 'old gang', which dominated the society thereafter".

If you re-read the Fabian Essays today you will be struck with what a "mixed bag" the earliest Fabians were, how some of them were much more than reformists, and, as Hobsbawm remarks, how "dangerously radical" were some of their conceptions compared with the ideas of the right wing of the Labour Party today.

This particularly applies to some of the "lesser Fabians" like Hubert Bland, William Clarke etc., who are the subject of this pamphlet. One of the most interesting and best known of these is certainly Hubert Bland. "A Tory and imperialist by origin," who, "where others came from, or via Liberalism . . . came to Socialism via aestheticism and William Morris." Bland deeply distrusted the theory that all State control and collectivism was socialist, and described Sidney Webb's ideas as "sham socialism". He was a member of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.). He described Bismark's home policy as one of "erecting tricky legislative breakwaters against the swelling tide of socialism".

The pamphlet does not hide the weaknesses of Bland nor of the other "lesser Fabians", but it does bring out some of their positive aspects which are sometimes disregarded by those who have never troubled to read the *Essays* or other earliest Fabian writings or to appreciate what Hobsbawm calls "the complexity of the intellectual and social elements which went to form the early British Socialist movement of the 1880's and the original Fabian Society".

Mr. Balogh v. "New Thinkers"

An interesting—and unexpected—attack on some of the main economic ideas of C. A. R. Crosland, Strachey and other so-called "new thinkers", and written by Thomas Balogh—an Oxford economist and orthodox Labour man, appeared in *The New Statesman* (December 28, 1962). Balogh attacks some of the main premises advanced by this whole group and proves not only that actual developments have, in fact, been in the opposite direction, but that given the continued existence of the capitalist economic order no other result was possible.

He starts with full employment and economic growth. Those familiar with Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, Strachey's *Contemporary Capitalism*, the pamphlet' *Twentieth Century Socialism*, will be familiar with the fantastic claims advanced in these writings to the effect that capitalism has changed, that now economic crises are things of the past due to our knowledge of "Keynesian techniques" and that the state can now plan the economy and that no government would dare to allow slumps and mass unemployment to recur.

Balogh punctures all this nonsense. He writes:

> "Mr. Crosland's first volume [*The Future of Socialism*—Ed.] came out in 1952 at the precise moment when growth both in America and in this country slowed down. His recent collection of essays comes at a time when unemployment has become a live issue again. In large parts of the North of England unemployment is 8 per cent or over. In the U.S. there have been four recessions since the war and of increasing severity . . . the radical Kennedy administration has been unable to push recovery to a point where unemployment has fallen below 5 per cent and it is once more nearing 6 per cent."

All this, in spite of the fact that in the last twelve years some $600,000 million have been poured out on defence.

He contrasts this dismal record with Soviet economic advance. Citing United Nations economic data he states:

> "Russian industrial productivity (output per man) in the 'fifties increased by 7 per cent as against 4-5 per cent in Western Europe and less than 2 per cent in the U.S. and in the U.K. As a consequence Russian industrial output (according to semi-official U.S. findings) increased between 1955 and 1960 from 60 to 75 per cent of the American industrial output. At this rate the annual increase in Russian production is double the average American."

He also debunks another idea which has been repeated again and again by the "new thinkers". This is that there has been a "redistribution of income" and that extremes of wealth and poverty are tending to disappear, and that this is the result of "progressive taxation" and the institution of various social benefits—family allowances, old age pensions, etc.:

> "All the countries . . . whose experience is triumphantly quoted as a vindication of liberal Keynesian distributivism have in fact had a violent redistribution of income in favour of the higher income classes and of profits . . . far from it being true that progressive taxation can of itself bring about social change, we must recognise that effective taxation demands such powers on the part of the state as can hardly be secured in an economy where the commanding heights of economic activity still remain in the hands of a tiny minority."

All this is very welcome and reinforces the consistent exposure of the false ideas of the Crosland/Strachey school made by Communist writers, especially the comprehensive critique made by Emile Burns in his *Right Wing Labour* (Lawrence & Wishart, 7s. 6d.).

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Balogh's own solutions are in part mixed and confused, in part a reaffirmation of general socialist principles, though the class issues involved are never mentioned. His solutions for the immediate problems of economic stagnation and unemployment are his favourite "National Incomes policy". This is another name for the "national wages policy" which he has consistently advocated, and which has been as consistently rejected by the trade union movement. He recognises that his "National Incomes policy" involves "planned price and dividend policies". How these are to be achieved within the framework of a "democratic" (i.e. capitalist) society he does not indicate. But he seems to believe that it is possible.

He declares that he does not disagree with the aims of the "new thinkers", only with the means they advocate. He himself, however, says "state initiative and, indeed, social ownership, seem to be needed more rather than less".

Benjamin Britten's War Requiem

Many people consider that this work by Britten, commissioned for the Coventry Festival, and performed in the Cathedral, and again recently in Westminster Abbey (another performance at the Albert Hall on January 9th) is a masterpiece, and the composer's finest work. It is anti-war, a plea for peace and the brotherhood of man; the words of the Requiem have been selected from the Mass for the Dead, interspersed with deep imaginative insight by poems by Wilfred Owen, killed in 1918 fighting in the first world war. In a Preface to his poems, Owen wrote, "My subject is war, and the pity of war. All a poet can do today is warn, that is why the true poet must be truthful."

Britten has matched up to this, and has written a hauntingly beautiful and profoundly disturbing work. Not only the vileness of war, but the comradeship of men are the dominating features, and the imaginative music is full of deep feeling, sorrow and anger. Each poem heightens the Latin text musically and verbally. As an example the tolling of the bells for the dead in Requiem Aeternam suggests Owen's "What passing bells for these who die like cattle?"

The Requiem was written to convince people of the indignity and vileness of war and it has achieved its purpose using huge forces, three soloists (soprano, tenor and bass), a mixed choir, a boy's choir, a full-sized orchestra including bells and gongs, as well as a chamber ensemble, the dramatic contrasts are enormous, and are employed with overwhelming effect. The result is music very much of this century, without gimmicks and understandable to everyone.

American Foreign Policy

We have just received an important book—*American Policy and the Cold War* (New Century Publishers, New York). It is written by Herbert Aptheker, editor of our U.S. contemporary, *Political Affairs,* outstanding U.S. Marxist scholar and historian, leading American Communist who, along with all other Communists in the U.S.A. faces persecution and imprisonment as a result of the recent verdict convicting the Communist Party of the U.S.A. of being "an agent of the Soviet Union".

The chapter headings in this book themselves reveal the extraordinary breadth and variety of the subjects dealt with. The main political questions, the most important world events and many questions of controversy in the international labour movement, all seem to receive due treatment. Some examples—"The Summit Smash-up", "Imperialism and the Bomb", "The United States and Colonialism", "The Truth about the Korean War", "What Happened in Hungary", "The U.S. and China", "The Cuban Revolution", "The Middle East, Peace and Independence", etc., etc. The last section of the book contains a number of chapters devoted to a more detailed analysis of internal developments in the United States.

A first quick glance whets the appetite for deeper study. We hope to return to this book in more detail in a future issue. Readers, however, who may like to get it can through Central Books or Collet's Bookshop (price 38s.).

Utopian Socialism

It is good to have available in English one of the most interesting works of Plekhanov, which, so far as I know, had not previously been translated into our language. I mean the short study on Utopian Socialism which he wrote in 1913 (*Utopian Socialism of the Nineteenth Century,* F.L.P.H., 1s. 3d.).

Readers of Plekhanov will always be impressed by his great erudition, by the breadth of his interests and of his reading. In this work which treats mainly the Utopian Socialists of Britain, France and Germany, he shows a very considerable degree of knowledge of English radicalism and early English socialists. It is not only that he seems well read in Robert Owen. That is not uncommon. But he seems to have studied Godwin, to be well acquainted with the Corresponding Societies, and to have a fair idea of the works of Dr. Charles Hall, John Gray, J. F. Bray and others, who still today are sadly neglected and whose works are, for the most part, only to be found as rare books in a few central libraries.

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Interesting are the comparisons that Plekhanov makes between the British and French Utopian Socialists. Though the French perhaps painted a more vivid picture of the society of the future, Plekhanov considers that the British gave far more thought to the potential productive capacity of developing technique and therefore to the *practical* method of solving the problems of poverty:

> "The English socialists attached tremendous historical importance to modern society's possession of mighty productive forces. In their opinion the existence of such forces made it possible, for the first time, to refashion society in such a way that it should contain neither rich nor poor . . . the vast majority of French Utopian Socialists lagged far behind their English colleagues in an understanding of the *real nature of the social and economic consequences* of contemporary technical progress."

Plekhanov had no illusions about the weaknesses of the Utopians, and provides some extremely interesting material of their rejection of the class struggle and opposition to working class *political* activity. But he did appreciate and pay tribute to their importance in the history of development of Socialist ideas. The Utopian critique of capitalism and the Utopian vision of the future society of Socialism inspired sections of the working class who went far beyond the Utopias and rejected in practice the Utopian rejection of class struggle.

Road to Freedom in S. Africa

In spite of all the brutal repression of the Verwoerd Government, the South African Communist Party, though illegal, still exists and gives leadership. The new programme of the Party, just published under the title *The Road to South African Freedom* is a splendid testimony to a Party with a clear line and policy. The front section deals with the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, the present relation of world forces and the fight for Peace and Socialism.

Another section is devoted to the African Revolution and exposes "African exceptionalism", while showing the special conditions and needs of the people and how they will best be met in most parts of Africa at the present time by the formation of states of national democracy, as a transitional stage to socialism.

Most of the programme is naturally devoted to South Africa, where there is a special type of colonialism, "in which the oppressing White nation occupied the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and lived side by side with them". Racial differences and prejudices have been cultivated by the South African and foreign monopolies and the large landowners "as their most effective instrument in their insatiable drive for cheap labour and high profits".

The South African Party fully backs the "Freedom Charter" which has been adopted by all sections of the national liberation movement and, within the general terms of the charter, puts forward immediate proposals not for a socialist but for a national democratic state, as a basis for discussion by all patriotic and democratic people.

A most important section of the programme deals with the question of violence or non-violence. It shows that the national government is closing all the channels of normal political struggle, preparing for civil war and leaving the people no option but to "take up arms to defend themselves". Nevertheless the Party does not rule out any prospect of non-violent transition but believes that the development of militant and revolutionary people's forces increases the possibility of a peaceful transfer of power.

A spirit of confidence permeates the whole programme and the conviction is expressed that the victory of the South African democratic revolution is certain in the near future.

Week of Debate

This journal is arranging in London in November a series of discussions under the general title, *The Challenge of Marxism—A Week of Debate*. A Sub-Committee is now at work on the programme and on the organisational details. It is hoped to have the programme complete and ready for public announcement in May.

Readers of *Marxism Today* will recall Phyl Griffith-Hentges' report in our June 1962 number on the "Week of Marxist Thought" held in Paris December 1961. Our week will also be one in which, we hope, Marxists and non-Marxists will have public discussions covering a wide range of topics. Six of these will be "main" ones—that is, they will be held in large halls (St. Pancras Town Hall, Caxton Hall and Conway Hall). The remainder will be smaller gatherings.

It is hoped to be able to arrange other events like exhibitions and special book displays during the week. The aim is to bring together in a week of varied activities and events some thousands of people—workers, students and intellectuals—for the discussion of important ideological topics.

Readers of *Marxism Today* who have ideas and suggestions to offer are invited to get in touch with the secretary of the Sub-Committee: T. Ainley, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2.

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The Crisis and the General Election

J. R. Campbell

NEVER has a Government met with such an accumulation of disasters as the Tory Government in the recent period. Its demoralisation grows with each successive disaster. It reels around adopting some expedient or brazen stunt, in order to create the impression that it is really trying to do something constructive.

Its economic policy is in ruins. It has repeatedly adopted measures which have only served to worsen the situation. In the spring of 1961, when many observers were predicting the fall of demand, particularly in the private sector of the economy, the Government was painting the picture of a new wave of excess demand, overloading the economy and leading to a new and tremendous burst of inflation. Hence the ruthless application of the dear money policy, the wages pause and the extra taxes on consumers. In the subsequent months when the full effects of this were being reflected in a slackening of activity everywhere, the Government was still stressing the danger of the overloading of the economy, as a result of the alleged excess purchasing power in the hands of the people. In his 1962 Budget Mr. Selwyn Lloyd was still uttering dire warnings to this effect. Purchasing power in the hands of the people was growing and still represented the main danger, he insisted. If the condition of the economy did actually deteriorate the Government might do something, but it was not necessary meantime. His successor Mr. Maudling continued to bewail the danger of excess purchasing power. When he was forced finally to adopt a policy of stimulation, he applied it in a hesitant, uncertain fashion, which robbed it of any effect which it might have had. Post war credits releases were stepped up, the purchase tax on cars was reduced, increased investment allowances were granted, and at last a general cut in purchase tax made, but the economy continues to toboggan steadily downward.

At the beginning of 1962 the Government announced a five years "defence perspective". In a little more than six months the Skybolt project was abandoned and the Government was left without effective means of delivering its so-called nuclear deterrent by the mid-60's. It is now going over to the Polaris missile, fired from submarines, in 1970, without any real idea of its cost.

Its foreign policy has received devastating blows. The United States embarked on its Cuban adventure, which might have resulted in thermo-nuclear war, without any real consultation with Britain and the rest of its allies. The Government had to follow meekly without having any voice whatever in the formulation of policy. The U.S. is steadily pushing Britain out of its traditional "spheres of influence" like the Yemen, or Katanga. The great over-boosted "cure-all"—the Common Market—is running into one snag after another, and it is clear that little or no concessions are going to be made to Britain. Yet so much propaganda has been done in business circles, about the Market as a "cure-all" that an immense crisis of confidence is raging, as entry is delayed.

Ever since the end of the war British policy has been directed to rebuilding London as the main financial centre in the world. Monetary measures have been repeatedly operated in order to strengthen the pound and advance nearer to this objective. Yet it is clear that Britain's "allies" are increasingly opposed to this project, and that the existence of London as a major financial centre and of the sterling area is being challenged. The United States seems to envisage the creation of two major financial centres in the world—the U.S.A. and the Common Market. The heavy economic sacrifices endured by the British people, to keep the pound sterling as one of the world's major currencies are likely to prove to have been in vain.

Yet at the very moment when the Government is reeling under a succession of reverses, the official Opposition is pulling its punches and is helping to prolong Macmillan's disastrous rule over the British people.

With this political crisis firmly in mind, let us look first at the international economic situation, then at some major aspects of the British economic situation and then at the political and economic tasks we must undertake, in order to develop the movement, bring down the Govern-

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ment and defeat the Tories in the next general election.

Perhaps the major feature of the international situation is the growing gap between the highly developed capitalist world and the primary producing countries which are exploited by it. This is one of the powerful economic factors at the base of the colonial liberation movement.

The International Scene

Average price of primary commodities fell by 11 per cent from 1957 to the second quarter of 1962, while the price of the exports of manufactured goods bought by these countries rose steadily. All the varied forms of "aid" bestowed on these countries, with or without strings, do not compensate the primary producers for this deterioration in their terms of trade. This is a persisting form of colonialism that grows steadily, even after those countries have won political independence.

The next important trait of the international political situation is the deepening of the contradiction between the growing productive capacity, and the limited consuming power of society that is now manifest in all capitalist countries. In the United States, manufacturing output which rose steadily throughout 1961, reaching a high point in mid-1962 was still only 87 per cent of capacity and unemployment was above five per cent of the labour force. The Common Market Commission reports a "great amount of slack" in the capital goods sectors due "to more sluggish demand against the background of steadily rising capacity."

As a consequence of this there is a marked increase in international competition leading to a cut in profit margins in important sections of capitalist industry. In Britain, for example, in manufacturing industry, profits as a percentage of net assets fell from 20.4 per cent in 1961 to 18.4 per cent in 1962. In chemicals they fell from 22.6 per cent to 18.9 per cent, in steel from 19.6 per cent to 14.8 per cent, and in motors and vehicles from 25.9 per cent to 18.9 per cent. Even in industries where the mass of profits is still growing, the compression of profit margins is evident. It is possible to exaggerate this (one must remember that overall, in manufacturing industry in Britain, there has been a slight increase in dividends) but the tendency is there and it has been inhibiting investment in some capitalist countries.

A feature of this fiercer competition is of course the desire of all capitalist states to obtain a more favourable balance of payments—something that is impossible in all capitalist states simultaneously. Obviously the attempt of all to sell more than they buy can only result in narrowing the world market, and in creating still greater pressure on the ex-colonial countries and on wages and salaries and working class conditions generally.

It is clear that once major capitalist currencies became convertible, once international currency speculation became once more respectable, it became difficult for particular capitalist countries to engage in an expansionary budgetary or monetary policy, if their competitors were not also doing so. In fact the expansion (with its accompanying inflation) which took place in the major capitalist countries in the 1950's was based on the fact that the United States could afford to run a substantial deficit on its balance of payments and as a consequence lose gold to other countries. There is a point beyond which even the richest capitalist country cannot allow this to develop, and the United States is today fighting as desperately as anyone, to have a favourable balance and avoid losing gold.

Pressure on Wages

In these circumstances there is one policy that is virtually universal throughout the capitalist world, state promoted downward pressure on wages in the alleged interests of competitive efficiency. In Britain the Government is seeking to develop one of the tightest systems of wage regulation obtaining anywhere in the capitalist world. This is not a passing phase of capitalist policy due to the fact of recession. State regulation of wage increases is a permanent feature of state monopoly capitalism.

Another feature of the present situation is the coming together of medium sized capitalist states in forms of political and economic integration. Economically the object is to form a large internal market, affording protection and the maximum possibilities of expansion to industries located within the market and providing a protected jumping off ground into outside markets. This is the economic basis of the Common Market and similar ventures are discussed in other parts of the capitalist world. One feature of this form of integration must be noticed. It must be larger than a national market but there must be limits to the number of countries that are included otherwise the advantages of a tight monopolistic market could be lost. This is a fact that the British devotees of the Market have tended to ignore.

Hopes of U.S.A.

With recession and stagnation spreading, the hopes of the capitalist world are fixed on the

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possibility of the U.S. Government giving the economy a shot in the arm, the beneficial results of which would be felt throughout all the capitalist economies. The U.S. policy, dominant in 1961-62, of allowing the economy to expand, with no other stimulus than the traditional arms programme, broke down in the New York stock market collapse of 1962.

It began to be realised that, despite all talk about an "era of full employment", a quite dangerous recession could take place in the capitalist world. Such a recession did not materialise in 1962, but unless the U.S. Government does something special it could very well occur in 1963.

So we had at the meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development held in Paris in November, the continental European countries rejecting an internal expansionary policy as far as their own economies were concerned, but arguing nevertheless that a spot of expansion and inflation will do the United States no harm, and might do the world capitalist economy a lot of good. The U.S. administration seems agreed that such a policy is necessary but the questions arise, (1) will it be effective in view of the large amount of excess capacity in U.S. industry and, (2) if it has even slightly adverse effects on the U.S. balance of payments, will the speculators begin to launch an attack on the dollar?

Britain Today

In 1962 Britain had probably the worst year of any major capitalist country. The increase in exports was tiny and fell far short of expectations. Production which was believed to be expanding slowly but steadily, was revealed to have fallen quite sharply, unemployment increased in months when it usually fell, and the delusive escape route of the Common Market remained firmly closed. Of all the major capitalist countries the United Kingdom had the poorest increase in its gross domestic product (1 per cent); the poorest increase in exports (3 per cent); the smallest increase in private consumption (1.2 per cent); the smallest increase in public consumption which includes the social services (.5 per cent), and a reduction in fixed capital formation. The willingness of businessmen to expand, is one of the factors maintaining employment in capitalist society, and Britain's position is grim. In volume and in terms of 1958 prices, capitalist expenditure in manufacturing industry was 18 per cent lower in the third quarter than a year previously.

Yet despite this hideous failure, all the old millstones which have hung around the neck of the British capitalist economy for years are becoming heavier. Total military expenditure (much of it dissipated in weapon failures) has grown sharply as have overseas military expenditure; the dear money policies aimed at protecting the City as a financial centre, have only recently been removed. So when all suggestions—good, bad and indifferent—for stimulating the British capitalist economy have been examined, the inescapable fact remains, that unless these long standing sources of weakness are removed, the chances of even short-term palliatives working successfully are pretty remote.

Make the Government Resign

The wage situation deserves mention. From January 1961 to October 1962 weekly wage rates rose by 7.6 points while the index of retail prices (even before the recent increases due to the cold are taken into account) rose by 6.9 per cent. So over the 22 months wages were practically stagnant. True, in 1962 there was a slight improvement over 1961, but microscopical. We have read how greater numbers of workers have had a wage increase in 1962 than in the previous year. But what does it reveal? The wage index in 1962 up by 4.4 per cent, retail prices up by 3.5 per cent.

If we take earnings—inflated by overtime and speed-up, which are usually regarded as proving the point of increasing working class affluence—they have gone up by 8.5 points in the 22 months from January 1961 to October 1962, but the cost of living has gone up by 6.9 points—an increase in real terms of 2.3 per cent in the period. So one can say whether we take increases in real wage-rates or real earnings the result in the last two years has been the worst for over a decade—since the Rearmament inflation of 1951.

It is in these circumstances that we are seeking, not only to carry out an unprecedentedly powerful campaign on our own behalf, but to rouse the entire movement to struggle to force the resignation of the Government and an early General Election, resulting in the shattering defeat of the Tories.

We hope to see this issue raised in every union branch, in all trades councils and labour parties, in every union conference, in all the struggles and campaigns around jobs. If Britain is to emerge from its worst post-war crisis, the defeat of this Government must be hastened.

End Nuclear Strategy

In this campaign the following major points need stressing. The people must end the whole monstrous inflated delusion that Britain can be defended by nuclear strategy and that it can play

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a major role in a nuclear arms race, growing more expensive. This was a stupid unconvincing position when nuclear weapons were atom bombs and planes. A modest supply could be bought, even if their use was to provoke retaliation and the nuclear annihilation of Britain. It becomes a totally lunatic position when nuclear weapons are hydrogen bombs, delivered by ever more intricate rockets.

It is probably true that the U.S. would like to deprive Britain of nuclear weapons altogether and at once. It would be silly, in resenting this, to hang on to weapons whose cost will only make Britain's crisis insoluble.

Nor should resentment at U.S. tactics justify support for any half-way Labour Party position —namely a European deterrent under NATO control, for all this conception means is that the most powerful nuclear weapons are directly under U.S. control and the less powerful under NATO control—which means in the last analysis, under American control also. Next to America, because of the strategical set-up this would give West German militarism increased *de facto* control of nuclear weapons.

The real alternative is for Britain completely to abandon nuclear strategy and the cold war which it expresses, and to take a lead in promoting a test ban, and an advance to comprehensive disarmament, starting with missiles and missile bases. We have to seize every opportunity to help the peace movement to advance such propositions among the mass of the people.

Alternative to Market

We must revive in a many-sided way the campaign against the Common Market, for here there is a danger of our being caught asleep at our posts.

Just as an attempt is being made to develop feeling against the Americans who want to stop Britain having nuclear weapons, feeling is being developed against the French who want to keep Britain out of the Common Market, so that people begin to say we ought to go in at any price.

This is basically the position of Harold Macmillan. The world is being dominated by great powers like the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. China will soon, he declares, be a great industrial power. The conclusion he draws is not that Britain should cut out exploitation, parasitism and waste, bring its major industries under national ownership and develop its resources to the utmost by planning. His solution is simply that Britain should merge with other European states in the Common Market, should accept majority decisions as to foreign policy, defence, taxation, social services etc., and that Common Market legislation on a whole variety of questions should be applied, without the British Parliament being consulted. In other words Britain should not seek to reconstruct its economy and advance on the basis of freedom but should merge with the Common Market and have its policy very largely determined by its partners in that organisation. It follows from this, that no matter how contemptible the concessions offered in the negotiations, the Prime Minister and the Government will endeavour to force Britain into the Market at any price. The Labour Party is facilitating this by refusing to conduct an active campaign, and by awaiting the outcome of negotiations.

In this situation it is absolutely necessary to revive the campaign against the Market, above all exposing how it undermines British independence, denying the right of the British Government to conduct an independent foreign policy, to attempt to control the economy, to arrange taxation and social services independent of its "partners".

The economic alternative to this policy is for Britain to refuse to be shut up in a World European box, to declare its willingness to trade with all countries, to make special arrangements for trade with the Socialist world, with the countries of the British Commonwealth, and with the underdeveloped world generally. This policy of rejecting nuclear strategy, promoting disarmament, and keeping free of the shackles of the Common Market, does not mean for Britain a diminished role in the world. On the contrary, they mean ending the terrifying drain on British resources and creating conditions for expansion and prosperity.

"New Capitalism"

Perhaps the major lesson of the domestic situation is the collapse in practice of all the innumerable theories of the "new capitalism". It had become a dogma that a Socialist transformation of society, or any advance in that direction is now totally unnecessary; that as far as unemployment, the great plague of capitalist society in past years, was concerned the Governments had new techniques which would enable it to be eliminated, if it should appear. From this it was deduced that there is nothing that Socialism could do for the workers that could not equally be done under capitalism, provided sufficient popular pressure was maintained on the Government.

More than six months have passed since the

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Government began to apply measures to stimulate the economy, and yet the level of activity declines and unemployment grows. It is one thing for firms to respond to Government stimulants, when they feel that they need masses of new equipment anyhow and might as well take advantage of Government policy and get it cheap anyhow. It is quite another position when firms, over a number of years, have installed masses of new equipment, which owing to past Government policy, and the recession in the capitalist world, they are not in a position fully to utilise. So long as there is overcapacity particularly in recently constructed plants, firms are chary of launching out in further expansion.

So the idea of the Government regulating the monopoly capitalist economy from outside, at one moment seeking to induce industry to expand, at another to apply the brakes, so that development takes place with a minimum of sharp ups and downs, has proved difficult to apply in practice. The great capitalist firms are only too willing to co-operate with the Government when they can clearly see the possibilities of extra profits for themselves. Now, not seeing such a prospect, they are dragging their feet and, as far as private enterprise in concerned, it is already clear that there will be less development in the first half of 1963, than in the similar period last year. On the other hand the Government is hoping to enlarge capital expenditure in the nationalised industries which are under its direct control. So the idea that ownership and operational control of industries are irrelevant, and that the Government can always force them to do what it wants them to do, whether they are privately owned or otherwise, has been completely exposed.

Therefore at the very forefront of our struggle there must be increased exposure of the great monopolies, and the fight to bring in to national ownership the industries they control. This means a drive for the nationalisation of steel, chemicals, the engineering industry (with emphasis on motors, aircraft, electronics), shipbuilding and shipping, building and building materials. To the extent that the State has a grip of these industries and is under the continuous pressure of the Labour movement, it can plan for development and the proper location of industry.

We need an economic policy for the existing nationalised industries, above all a policy for the integration of the transport industry. We believe that important concessions can be won in this respect. The policy of closing down lines which do not "pay", threatens to undermine the economic existence of quite important areas. We must do all in our power to keep the campaign against closures at a high level, preparing to bring new forces into the struggle when the full plans of Dr. Beeching are disclosed in April. Already Macmillan is beginning to hedge on this question. In his Birmingham speech on January 9, he hinted that it might be necessary to keep some railway lines open on the basis of a subsidy and that the Government might be content with reducing rather than eliminating the deficit. The fundamental fight for the integration of all forms of transport has still to be waged. A national energy policy must also be forced on the Government and coal promoted as the essential fuel which can be successfully produced inside Britain itself.

Fight for Jobs

Next in importance comes the fight for jobs which may be a good deal more difficult than many people yet realise. One factor in all this is the widespread existence of excess capacity in industry, so that it is difficult to induce most exployers to undertake new construction. A still more important factor is the fact that, if they went all out, most industries could produce more than they are doing at the moment, without employing extra labour. In reply to a questionnaire about industrial prospects, initiated by the *Economic Review*, only the motor and the chemical industries displayed confidence that there would be increased demand for their products. The motor manufacturers estimated that their output would increase by 15 per cent, but that employment would only increase by one per cent. The chemical industry believed that it would increase its output with fewer workers in employment. For the other industries no improvement is in sight. So, even if the economic situation of most industries improved in the sense that there was an increased demand for their products, it does not follow that they would employ more labour.

The fight against dismissals from the factories, for the retention of workers in employment until alternative work can be found, the sharing of work in an emergency, is one of the most effective forms of struggle, for it implies that the fight for jobs starts while the workers are still in the factories. This struggle, while sustaining some reverses has on the whole met with considerable success, and has succeeded in preserving workshop organisation which would otherwise have been undermined by the tame acceptance of dismissal. The workshop struggle requires to be combined with mass demonstrations for jobs on a local, regional and national basis.

It is essential to place in the very forefront the

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demand for the direction of firms or sections of firms, to areas where the percentage of unemployment is high. The uncontrolled development of capitalism is creating new depressed areas in various parts of the country and must be stopped.

The Government must be forced to take special measures to help industries which have been disorganised by the abrupt changes in its arms policy —especially in aircraft and shipbuilding.

Alongside this it is essential to campaign for a marked increase in unemployment benefit immediately. While all social insurance benefits must be raised, the increase in unemployment benefit is an immediate necessity and should not be delayed until there is a radically reorganised system of social insurance.

The Wages Struggle

A necessary feature of the struggle for jobs is the increase in working class purchasing power, to be secured by all round increases in wages and salaries. The Government is seeking to confine wage and salary increases to around $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 per cent. It is seeking to influence Boards in the Nationalised industries, arbitration bodies, in pursuance of this policy. It expects the National Incomes Commission rigorously to operate this line.

The unions must defeat the efforts of the Right Wing leadership to secure a *de facto* acceptance of wage restriction and must be prepared effectively to challenge it in struggle.

It is essential in this connection to persuade the unions, manual and non-manual alike, to boycott the National Incomes Commission, and defeat the efforts of the government to make this commission an acceptable and authoritative body.

End Housing Tragedy

It is essential to mobilise the British people to end the tragic housing situation. Tory housing policy has led to a sharp reduction in houses built by local authorities for renting from 143,300 per annum in 1958 to 116,100 in 1961, while houses built for sale increased from 130,000 to 180,000 per annum in the same period. This scale of house-building, with its excessive concentration on houses for sale has reduced the slum clearance programme of the Government to a pitiful farce. There are 3,000,000 houses in the United Kingdom which are classified as slums and they are being cleared at the rate of 60,000 per year. It will therefore be 50 years before the existing slums will be cleared and masses of existing houses will, in this period, have deteriorated into slums. The Communist Party demand for 400,000 new houses per year (and a reduction of the number of houses for sale now being built) is the only one which can begin to make a dent in this immense problem. This involves subsidies, lower interest rates and public ownership of all land for building.

Education

The recent exposure (by the National Union of Teachers) of the slum conditions in many primary schools, illustrates the immense educational backwardness of British education despite some recent advances. It is essential to increase the school-leaving age to 16 and to reduce the number of children per class to 30. It is estimated that this alone will require 70,000 extra teachers and a vast extension of school building and university development. In the number of students in universities, Britain is second from the bottom amongst capitalist countries forming part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. To compare only capitalist West European countries, Belgium has 7.3 per cent of the age group 20 - 24 at universities, France 6.9, West Germany 3.5 and Britain 2.8 per cent. Belgium is third on the O.E.C.D. list, coming after U.S. and Canada, France is fifth, West Germany fifteenth and Britain eighteenth. This is a national disgrace.

Fringe Benefits and Social Insurance

It is essential to begin a powerful struggle, politically and industrially on a factory, industrial or national level for improved fringe benefits which should include Three Weeks Annual Holiday with Pay (with Christmas, Easter and August Bank Holiday extra); Full wages when sick; A factory medical service; Industrial pensions; Adequate industrial training and re-training. Most non-manual workers in industry are already getting fringe benefits which are denied to manual workers. This situation must be ended.

The whole scale of social insurance benefits, pensions, sickness benefits etc. must be raised to £4 per week per person, plus children's allowances.

The General Election

The aim of the General Election campaign should be to stir up the British people to demand the resignation of the Government and an immediate General Election.

This demand should be raised in every wage movement, in all struggles for jobs, in every trade union branch, trades council, local Labour Party and at every union conference. We need a tremendous campaign to shake the Government to its foundations. Those who are relying on the automatic swing against the Government to

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secure its defeat at a General Election are in fact relying on a hunch which has in the past often been found to be wrong. Only an *active* campaign on the basis of a positive policy can further undermine the Government and ensure its defeat in the election.

A tremendous effort to rouse and inspire the whole movement could result from the Communist Party's General Election campaign, not only in the constituencies which are contesting but throughout the country. Special efforts must be made, however, in the constituencies in order to secure the return of Communist candidates. The time to make those special efforts is *now*. It is not the campaign during the General Election which is decisive, so much as the campaign from now to the General Election, the campaign designed to secure the resignation of the Government. The extent to which the entire movement can be roused, depends primarily on a great increase in the activity of the Communist Party, accompanied by intensified recruitment in every part of the country, but in particular in the constituencies. This will ensure that no amount of trickery will enable the Government to escape retribution at the hands of the British people.

Belgium in the Common Market

Pierre Joye

Member of the Central Committee of the Belgian Communist Party

THE Common Market has now begun the sixth year of its existence; the Treaty of Rome became operative on January 1st, 1958, and the European Coal and Steel Community (E.C.S.C.) will soon celebrate its tenth anniversary. Thus European integration has been a reality long enough for us clearly to judge the effects which it has had on the life of the countries of the Community, and especially on the life of Belgium.

The lessons which can be drawn from this experience are interesting for those countries which are debating entry into the Common Market. Of course the consequences of their entry into the European Community would not necessarily be identical in all details. In certain fields they might be less serious, whilst in others still more grave.

There is a French saying that "comparisons are misleading" and there is no doubt that the concrete effects of the Common Market will differ to an extent according to the specific characteristics of each country. We should not lose sight of this aspect of the problem, for the economic structure of Belgium, a very industrialised country, though it has many analogies with that of Britain, has also definite differences in a series of fields. This is the case, for instance, in the question of coal; for not only are the Belgian coalfields less rich but they are under the exploitation of private firms. Similarly, the general direction of foreign trade is very different; the problem of "imperial preference" has never been posed for Belgium, and its exports to the Congo have never represented more than 5 per cent of its total exports, even in the colonial epoch.

However, whilst we must take account of differences, Belgium's experience permits us to clarify some important aspects of the Common Market.

A Legend that must be Destroyed

The supporters of European integration often use an argument which might seem decisive; they say that, since the creation of the Common Market, industrial production has increased much faster in the six countries of the European Community than in the seven of the Free Trade Association and, they add, that it is the same with trade; for total exports, and still more for trade between the members of the group, progress has been definitely more rapid with the "six" than with the "seven".

This is true. But the case of Belgium shows that these differences in rate of growth must not be attributed solely or even principally to the creation of the Common Market. Whilst industrial production increased an average of 30 per cent within the European Economic Community between 1957 and 1961, i.e. about twice as fast as in the Free Trade Zone, the progress registered in Belgium was much slower; there,

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industrial production only increased 10 per cent at the most, or less than Great Britain during the same period. When one examines the economic development of the principal capitalist countries over a longer space of time, one sees that, at least during the first period of its operation, the Common Market did not bring about such deep and beneficial results as its promoters claim. Very definite differences in the rate of development of the different capitalist countries were apparent already *before* the signature of the Treaty of Rome. If one looks, for instance, at the last twelve years, the period 1951 - 1962, one sees that not only Western Germany, Italy and France, who are today members of the Common Market, but equally countries which are not members of it—like Austria, and still more Japan—consistently reached a rate of growth much higher than that of Great Britain, the United States and Belgium. Moreover, it will be seen that the advance which took place in the years 1954 - 1955, i.e. well before the Common Market, was almost as much as that of the years 1959 - 1960, and that, already then, the growth was greater in those countries which were to show better results five years later.

The reasons for these differences of rate of increase must be sought, therefore, in the conditions in which these countries found themselves immediately following the last world war. The size of investments made in those countries where destruction was greatest had allowed Germany, Italy and Japan, and even France, to reconstruct their industries on more modern bases and thus to achieve a higher rate of development. Belgium, on the contrary, which came out of the war with its industrial potential almost intact, preserved to a large extent its traditional economic structure, which explains why its later development tends to resemble that of Great Britain.

In these conditions it is wrong to try and draw final conclusions from a global comparison of the results achieved in the European Economic Community on the one hand, and the Free Trade Association on the other. The example of Belgium shows that entry into the Common Market does not automatically ensure a rapid rate of economic growth. Moreover, if the average rate of development has been slower with the "7", it is because three-fifths of their industrial production is provided by Great Britain, a country whose expansion is slow, whilst the productive potential of Belgium, the rate of development of which has been very similar, does not represent even 6 per cent of the total of the "6".

As for the more rapid growth of trade relations between the countries of the Common Market, this follows above all from the more vigorous industrial development which has taken place in those countries. In any case the measures of "liberalisation" of trade within the Common Market can only have played a modest role until quite recent months; for the reduction of customs tariffs foreseen in the Rome Treaty has only been applied step by step, and, still at the end of 1960, these reductions represented only one-fifth of the tariffs that previously operated, i.e. rarely more than 4 per cent of the prices of heavily taxed products, or too little to exert a serious influence on business transactions or to modify commercial currents.

Increased Domination of the Monopolies

Whilst we must not exaggerate the results already achieved by the Common Market, we should not on the other hand minimise them.

In recent months the accelerated implementation of measures envisaged by the Rome Treaty reduced tariffs to a half of their original level. From this point on, reductions of customs tariffs begin to exert an important influence, all the more when they are accompanied by the setting up of a common external tariff, which acts as an increasing barrier on the import of products coming from countries situated outside the Community.

Moreover—and this aspect of integration is much more important still—the prospect of having a wider market greatly stimulated the movement of capitalist concentration. In Belgium particularly, this prospect influenced the monopolies towards greater and greater concentration of production within ever larger units in those sectors of the economy where they reckon that they will be capable of meeting the competition of their European partners.

Thus, more than half of Belgian metallurgical output is now carried out by only two enterprises —Cockerill-Ougrée and Hainant-Sambre. Just two enterprises—the Cimenteries Réunies de Belgique and Ciments d'Obourg—account for two-thirds of the total production of cement. One single firm—the Glaverbel—embraces all factories manufacturing glass panes, and a merger in the chemical field has brought into one single enterprise L'Union Chimique Belge, la Fabelta (artificial textiles), and la Sidac (cellulose).

The creation of enterprises of great size has certain positive aspects, because the very progress of technique demands bigger and bigger sales to ensure the best conditions of working. The criticisms which have to be made of steps taken in this direction in Belgium do not, therefore, contradict the necessity to carry out large-scale investments in order to provide industry with a more

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modern, more rational, more productive equipment. The criticisms are directed against the orientation given to the investments which have taken place in the course of recent years.

The creation of new enterprises has not taken place, taking into account the general interests of the country with a view to promoting the harmonious development of its economy. Even when the authorities intervened in the financing of projects, granting cheap credits and tax advantages, the choice of investments was alone determined by the interests of the great capitalist enterprises, which resulted in a growing lack of balance between different branches of industry and which led to over-equipment in certain sectors whilst others were neglected.

Whilst the creation of the Common Market resulted in the strengthening of the positions of the monopolies, experience has shown that the results were not advantageous to the country as a whole and did not favour a harmonious development of the national economy.

Growing Domination of Foreign Monopolies

The creation of the Common Market also favoured the creation of international capitalist agreements. The Belgian monopolies concluded more and more agreements with groups of foreign industrialists for joint exploitation of the Common Market.

But these agreements were concluded with only the interests of the monopolies in view and took no account whatsoever of the real needs of the country.

This is shown, for instance, by the initiative taken by Belgian capitalist groups (Société Générale), French (Schneider), Luxemburg (Arbed), and Italian groups (Falck) who came together to construct a "European" steel factory, the Sidmar Factory, at Selzaete in Belgium. Whilst on the one hand this factory may provide appreciable profits for its promoters, there is a danger that it will lead to a dangerous accentuation of the tendency towards over-equipment which is already evident in the Belgian steel industry and that it will compromise the position of enterprises which cannot dispose of such large-scale financial support.

Although the utility of this "European" factory is at least contestable, as steel already occupies a disproportional place in Belgian economy, the Government is giving its financial support to the realisation of the project. The State authorities refuse nothing to the international monopolies; and they have even agreed to provide a long-term loan to the promoters of Sidmar, which represents about half of the total cost of construction.

The Belgian official authorities are also supporting initiatives of foreign firms who want to establish branches in Belgium in order to secure a base for operation within "Little Europe".

Some British firms have done this, for instance Bowater, and Fisons, but above all it has been American enterprises. Between 1958 and 1961, 172 new enterprises were established in Belgium on the initiative of American companies, of which 77 in 1961 alone. The formation of the Common Market has, in fact, inspired numerous American producers to manufacture henceforth, within the barriers of the Community, products which previously they used to export to Europe, and Belgium is furnishing them with appreciable advantages. Taxation and the cost of labour are cut down in this way and government bodies are making great efforts to attract foreign investors. Many Belgian local authorities are offering sites at very cheap prices or even free to industrialists who are ready to set up factories, and accord them exceptional financial facilities. By means of subsidies provided by the Belgian State long-term loans are granted to them at extremely low rates —often at 2 per cent—to such an extent that an American business journal expressed the opinion that "Belgium can be considered as a little paradise for American investors".

Investments made in such conditions obviously take no account of the real needs of Belgian economy, of the possibilities and needs of the particular region where the new enterprises are being installed. Brought into existence essentially by the desire for profit through getting a foothold within the Common Market, this method of creating "European" branches tends to take on the character of a real economic colonisation, and to transform Belgium into a country of subsidiaries.

The Monopolies against the National Interests

The Belgian monopolies are not over-much worried by this perspective, for it matters little to them if whole branches of the national economy are exploited by foreign enterprises so long as they continue to get large profits in those sectors of the economy where they hold solid positions. With such a short-sighted policy, the Belgian monopolies have definitely taken a line of sacrificing those industries which they consider do not offer high enough profits within the framework of an extended market. Within the course of the last four years 106 *textile* factories of average size have had to close down, and 60 *pits* have been abandoned.

The attitude adopted by the Belgian monopolies towards the coalfields merits special examination. However much the structure of the

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Belgian coal industry may differ from the British one, its fate shows us what European integration can mean for other industries that the monopolies consider, rightly or wrongly, too little profitable.

In Belgium the pits had remained the property of private enterprise and the financial groups which control around 90 per cent of them were always fiercely opposed to all measures of nationalisation. This did not in any way prevent them calling on the Government for subsidies; purposely exaggerating their difficulties, they were awarded more than 19,000 million Belgian francs as subsidies in the course of the 14 years 1945-1958, i.e. more than the total capital invested in them. Despite this, they made very little effort to modernise their equipment and their yield remained definitely below that of neighbouring coalfields. The creation of the European Coal and Steel Community led them to give up all interest in an industry which no longer gave them profits equal to their appetites.

From the strictly capitalist point of view their calculation was justified, for it allowed the great metallurgical and chemical enterprises they owned to obtain cheaper fuel by purchasing foreign coal, German or American. From a national point of view the operation led to heavy loss, the abandonment of seams which were still perfectly workable, and economic ruin for whole regions. A plan of closure worked out by the High Authority of the E.C.S.C. with the agreement of the great monopolies in fact reduced Belgian production from 29 million to 21 million tons.

Increased Threat to Democracy

The disastrous results of European integration for the Belgian coalfields obviously does not mean that exactly the same damage to the coal industry will be repeated in other countries which have joined or might join the Common Market.

If the coalfields were sacrificed in Belgium it was because this suited the interest of the most powerful monopolies of the Community, both the coal producers of the Ruhr who saw in it the possibility of extending their markets, and the Belgian iron enterprises which wanted to procure cheaper fuel.

This is a further aspect of European integration which should be given careful attention, for it is a particularly serious threat to countries which join the Common Market.

The European Communities differ profoundly from the agreements and cartels set up in the past by industrial groups in order to co-ordinate their activities and share out markets. Created with the direct participation of the State, they are headed by supra-national organs (the "High Authority" of the E.C.S.C., the "Commissions" of the European Community and of Euratom) which furnish the monopolies with increased possibilities of exercising their domination.

Conflicts which have already put the High Authority of the E.C.S.C. in opposition to the Belgian Government show that such supra-national organs serve above all the interests of the monopolies and that they have no hesitation in denying the right of representative organisations of member States to take even the smallest initiative directed to a different purpose.

Such conflicts arose when the Belgian Government was forced to take account, to a certain extent, of the ever stronger resistance which the pit closures were meeting throughout the country. Whilst refusing to nationalise the coal industry in order to reorganise it on a healthier basis the Government, nevertheless, decided to create a "Coal Board", an official organ which was to have the right of fixing prices and establishing production programmes for the mines as a whole.

Although such rights were to say the least modest, they still seemed excessive to the monopolies who saw in them an attack on their privileges.

The High Authority supported the complaints of the monopolies and demanded the ending of the greater part of activities which the Coal Board was supposed to undertake, a Board which had been created by a law legally adopted by the Belgian Parliament. At the same time, it demanded that the pit closures should be accelerated at a moment when even the Belgian Government was admitting "that a further acceleration would lead to grave social disturbances".

Such interventions of the High Authority show how these supra-national institutions of the European Communities mean to exercise the considerable powers they hold.

The fundamental anti-democratic character of these bodies is one of the most disturbing aspects of European integration. Through the medium of technocrats who hold the levers of command in these supra-national Executives and who, in practice, are free from the control of public opinion and of the parliaments of member countries, the monopolies hope the more easily to impose their views within the European Communities.

The fate that has been reserved for the Belgian coal industry helps us to see what will happen tomorrow in other countries and in other industrial fields. The supra-national Executives will try to impose measures decided by the most powerful monopolies without taking the least account of the most legitimate interests and rights of the member countries of the Community.

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Charles Dickens: The Novelist and the People[1]

Arnold Kettle

CHARLES DICKENS was born on February 7th, 1812. The 150th anniversary of his birth gives us an opportunity to attempt an assessment of the achievement of this universal, yet very English, writer. For Dickens is one of that handful of writers whose name is a household word in dozens of countries of the world. Men and women who do not think of themselves as readers, let alone intellectuals, have read one or two Dickens novels; and to millions more in Europe and America, who may not actually have read one of the books, the names of certain characters—Oliver Twist, Mr. Micawber, Mr. Pickwick, David Copperfield—are familiar in the way that characters in a mythology are familiar. Perhaps no other writer of the last two hundred years has, to the same extent, entered the popular imagination. What is the secret of this remarkable achievement?

His Background

Charles Dickens's father was a very minor Civil Servant—a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. His background was that of the very lowest level of the petty bourgeoisie and his youth was by no means an easy one. His father, always inclined to instability and to living beyond his means (he seems, like many nineteenth-century petty bourgeois to have spent much of his time in a kind of dream-world), was nearly always in debt and in 1824 was imprisoned in the Marshalsea, the debtors' prison, so marvellously described in *Little Dorrit*. It was at this time that Charles (then twelve) for a period went to work in a blacking factory, a traumatic experience which was to form the basis of the bottle-washing episode in *David Copperfield* and which left its mark on the writer throughout his life.

The family fortunes recovered somewhat, though they were never very secure, and Dickens went to school again, but his education was never at all systematic. It was largely, indeed, a self-education and based on a fairly haphazard reading of past literature which amounted at times almost to immersion. When he left school, at the age of fifteen, he worked first of all as a solicitor's clerk, taught himself shorthand, and then, when he was seventeen, became a reporter in one of the minor law courts. This was followed by a period as a special kind of journalist, a reporter of the proceedings of Parliament, an occupation which left Dickens with a lifelong contempt for that institution.

Meanwhile he had begun writing. Success came relatively quickly and when it came it was sensational. There had never been anything like the success of *Pickwick*: even Scott's triumphs with *Waverley* paled beside it. At the age of twenty-five Dickens was established, not only as a phenomenally successful novelist, but as a public figure. He travelled up and down Britain and across America, lecturing and receiving homage as well as royalties. For the next thirty-three years he was one of the best-known figures in the country not merely as artist but as sage. He was a prodigious worker. As well as a continuous output of novels he edited several journals, of which the most successful was *Household Words*. His readership was extremely wide, covering in England, it has been estimated, more than one out of every ten inhabitants, and extending from the working class to the aristocracy, including Queen Victoria. Vast numbers of people of all classes wrote to him throughout his life, commenting on his novels, sometimes suggesting changes in their plots, asking his advice on personal and public problems. He did not hesitate to express himself publicly on most of the issues of the day, from problems of housing and sanitation to the reforming of prostitutes. He was many times asked to stand for Parliament. When he separated from his wife he published in *Household Words* a public (and, incidentally, very ill-advised) defence of his action.

His Ideological Position

The period of Dickens's life corresponds, of course, with the period of the establishment of industrial capitalism in Britain and of Britain as the dominant industrial capitalist power of the world. When he was twenty the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832 indicated that dominant power had passed from the hands of the land-owning aristocracy (like Sir Leicester Deadlock in *Bleak House*) into those of the industrialists, the businessmen like Bounderby in *Hard Times* and Podsnap in *Our Mutual Friend*. The 1830's and 1840's were decades of appalling misery and fierce class battles, the period of the

[1]We are grateful to our colleagues of *La Pensée*, Paris, for whom this article was originally written, for permission to print it in *Marxism Today*.

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first mass popular democratic movement in Britain (Chartism). In 1849, the year Karl Marx came as a refugee to Dickens's London, *David Copperfield* was appearing as a serial. In 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition of the Crystal Palace, symbol of the new era, *Bleak House* was written. The 1850's was a decade of capitalist expansion and prosperity, the first great modern capitalist boom. And although by 1870, the year of Dickens's death, that boom was over and the foundations of the modern British Labour and Trades Union movements had been laid, it may be said that Dickens died before the ideas of socialism had really begun to grip the minds of the working class (though of course it was in London that the First International was founded and there were British working-class leaders among the collaborators of Marx and Engels).

Dickens's ideological position, within this situation, is not altogether easy to define. In a basic sense it is true to say that he was born and remained a petit-bourgeois, accepting the capitalist system and, despite a good deal of criticism, working within it. And certainly there is much in the general public image of Dickens throughout his life which confirms this basic assessment. His niche within the Victorian social order, that almost universal homage to him, culminating inevitably in his burial in Westminster Abbey, the undeniable elements of philistinism and hypocrisy in his life and tastes, the frank enjoyment of bourgeois success, the limitations in political understanding involving—among other things—a total misunderstanding of the Trades Union movement. It is not hard, nor does it involve a falsification of the facts, to build up a picture of Dickens as a representative of Victorian philistinism and petty bourgeois pusillanimity. And his cheerful contempt for philosophic systems, that deep-rooted empiricism which is so typical an accompaniment of British bourgeois success, only adds to the apparent authenticity of such a picture.

The trouble about such an assessment, however, is a rather fundamental one: it leaves out almost every facet of Dickens's genius which makes him a great writer.

Art and Opinions

We must be careful, therefore, in discussing Dickens's class and ideological position, to distinguish between those aspects of his outlook which, while undoubtedly there, turn out in the end to be of relatively superficial significance, and those deeper impulses which, in the overall achievement of the writer, prove to have been the dominant ones. This distinction is partly a matter of preserving a proper balance in our judgements but also involves the kind of insight made explicitly by Engels in his famous judgment of Dickens's great contemporary, Balzac. It involves, in other words, the necessary distinction to be made between an artist's *opinions*, his consciously formulated ideas, which may well be inconsistent, trivial or reactionary, and his *art*, the actual content of his work, what it actually turns out to say and imply.

Dickens, like most artists, was not a systematic thinker. If one had to summarise his ideas they would turn out to be a very odd hotch-potch of materialism and idealism, paternalism and democratic feeling, confidence in science and unscientific prejudice, sentimentalism and hard, practical common sense. Yet at least two facets of his outlook can, even on this level, be isolated in a way which helps us to see a certain underlying consistency and—something I think important—a higher degree of unity between theory and practice than is to be found, for instance, in Balzac.

First, let us emphasise Dickens's life-long suspicion of metaphysical thinking. It is true that he remained, formally, an adherent of the Church of England. But in fact religious ideas as such, and particularly in their more mystical forms, meant very little to him. It is true that he was apt to talk about "human nature" in a somewhat suspect way as some unchanging essence, but in fact he always envisaged men and women in concrete terms within a particular social and historical situation. Both the confusion and the essential sanity of his thinking are well illustrated by a passage from a speech made at Birmingham during the last year of his life in which he had occasion to express his views on "materialism", as popularly conceived. What had, apparently, particularly riled him was a sermon, delivered only a few days previously, by Dr. Francis Close, Dean of Carlisle, who had delivered himself of the sentiment that "There is no question that there is in the present day an evil spirit of the 'bottomless pit' rising up among us . . . and he was bound to say he laid a large portion of it at the door of science". Dickens took up the point with a splendid gusto:

> "I cannot forbear from offering a remark which is much upon my mind. It is commonly assumed—much too commonly—that this age is a material age, and that a material age is an irreligious age. I have been pained lately to see this assumption repeated in certain influential quarters for which I have a high respect, and desire to have a higher. I am afraid that by dint of constantly being reiterated and reiterated without protest, this assumption—which I take leave altogether to deny—may be accepted by the more unthinking part of the public as unquestionably true; just as certain caricaturists and painters professedly making a portrait of some public man, which was not in the least like him, to begin with, have gone on repeating it and repeating it, until the public came to believe that it must be exactly like him, simply because it was like itself, and really have at last, in the fullness of time, grown almost to resent upon him their tardy discovery that

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> he was not like it. I confess, standing here in this responsible situation, that I do not understand this much-used and much-abused phrase a 'material age', I cannot comprehend—if anyone can: which I very much doubt—its logical signification. For instance, has electricity become more material in the mind of any sane, or moderately insane, man woman or child, because of the discovery that in the good providence of God it was made available for the service and use of man to an immeasurably greater extent than for his destruction? Do I make a more material journey to the bedside of my dying parents or my dying child, when I travel there at the rate of sixty miles an hour, than when I travel thither at the rate of six? Rather, in the swift case, does not my agonised heart become overfraught with gratitude to that Supreme Beneficence from whom alone can have proceeded the wonderful means of shortening my suspense? . . . When did this so called material age begin? With the invention of the art of printing? Surely it has been a long time about; and which is the more material object, the farthing tallow candle that will not give me light, or that flame of gas that will?"

Dickens the Radical

I have quoted the speech at length, not only because it is in some of its incidental aspects so splendidly Dickensian, but because it reminds us of two things: (i) Dickens's attitude to science, which is entirely sympathetic and not at all that of the "intellectual Luddites" of literary culture whom C. P. Snow has recently and opportunely attacked. Science, Dickens sees, not as a danger but as a blessing: it is its potentialities "for the service and use of man" that attract him, and his illustrations have all the homely practical effectiveness of a man used to thinking not in terms of abstraction but in those of the real world in which theory and practice have to be united. (ii) Dickens's refusal to be drawn into a way of thinking which sees "material" and "spiritual" as opposites. It is true that he uses phrases like "in the good providence of God", etc., but the *content* of such phrases is in fact humanist. The idealist *form* of such expressions is relatively unimportant, as one could guess from the phrase "Supreme Beneficence" used a few moments later with an ironical tone which reminds one of Gibbon and the rationalists of the Enlightenment. My point here is that though the philosophical implications of Dickens's argument in this passage are formally idealist, its tone and content are basically materialist and anti-metaphysical.

Secondly, it is important to stress that Dickens was politically a Radical. Radicalism in mid-nineteenth-century Britain is perhaps best defined as a thoroughgoing emphasis on the democratic aspects of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The Radicals were those, among the petty-bourgeoisie especially, who took democracy seriously. In the earlier part of the century they formed the left wing of the alliance against the remnants of feudalism, which carried the Reform Bill of 1832; but they were "anti-Manchester"[2] as well as anti-feudal and were never taken in by the claptrap of either the "Tory democrats" or the hard-faced businessmen who dominated the Liberal Party. In the very speech made at Birmingham from which I have just quoted, Dickens was to make his most important statement of political faith. He would, he announced, discharge his conscience of his political creed "which is contained in two articles, and has no reference to any party or persons" and proceeded: "My faith in the people governing, is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in the People governed, is, on the whole, illimitable."

The remark caused, at the time, quite a rumpus, especially among Liberals who, assuming that by "the people governing" Dickens was referring to Mr. Gladstone's government, thought Dickens must have turned Tory. The novelist himself did his best to clarify his meaning by insisting on a small "p" for the first people and a capital letter for the second and returned to the subject next time he was in Birmingham, adding for good measure an interesting quotation from Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England* which develops the theme that "lawgivers are nearly always the obstructors of society rather than its helpers".

That contemporary politicians and political theorists should have misunderstood Dickens's statement, despite his clear denial that he was referring to any party or persons, is not surprising, for what he said by-passes in two sentences the essential assumptions on which the political thinking of bourgeois democracy is based. The bourgeois democrat, who believes that the British parliamentary system as developed since 1832 is the apogee of democracy, cannot accept that there is a fundamental and insuperable division in his society between those who govern and those who are governed. For, after all, he will argue, the governed elect those who govern them. If the People choose as their rulers people who rule against them, or those whose interests are different from their own, then either they are very foolish (and probably not fit to govern anyway) or else they will discover their error and in the course of time correct it. That they cannot correct it within the framework of political assumption imposed by the socio-economic system as at present operating is to the average bourgeois democrat literally unthinkable, for it involves passing beyond the very assumptions on which his own thinking is based. For the theory of bourgeois democracy of the type developed in Britain in the last hundred and fifty years is in fact

[2] The centre of the new industrial bourgeoisie.

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dependent on the contention that there are within the society no insuperable class divisions, that is to say no basic divisions of interest which cannot, within the existing social order, be modified to the point of elimination. To put it another way, the bourgeois democrat cannot (without ceasing to be a bourgeois democrat) accept the proposition that the ruling class in his society, by virtue of its ownership of the productive forces and its control of the state and propaganda apparatus of society, is able to rule against the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people, despite the democratic rights the people have won.

Governing the Governed

The force of Dickens's statement of his political creed lies precisely in the recognition implicit in it of two separate and conflicting forces: the people governing and the People governed. That he was quite well aware, on a pretty deep level of political understanding, of what he was saying and doing is made clear by a letter he wrote James Fields, a few days after his second appearance at Birmingham in January 1870:

> "I hope you may have met with a little touch of Radicalism I gave them at Birmingham in the words of Buckle? With pride I observe that it makes the regular political traders, of all sorts, perfectly mad. Such was my intention, as a grateful acknowledgement of having been misrepresented."

Now the recognition of a fundamental division between People and rulers does not necessarily imply an analysis of the class basis of this division of the sort that Marx and Engels, contemporary citizens of Dickens's England, developed. One would not wish to give the impression that Dickens was an "unconscious" Marxist or even a pre-Marxian socialist. He was, as he himself recognised, a Radical with a good deal of the ambiguity that word implies. Yet his distinction between the people who govern and the People governed, and his commitment to the latter, is extremely important, for with all its limitations it gave him the basis for an outlook and sensibility which are, in the most profound sense of the word, popular.

Popular does not, if we are to use the word thoughtfully, mean simply pertaining to the people in a passive sense. On the contrary, to use the word in such a sense is to debase it and, in so doing, further debase the people. Popular literature is not simply the literature that large sections of the people happen, in a particular era, to read. On the contrary, a popular literature, if the phrase is not to become a mockery, is the literature which helps and strengthens the people, increases their self-confidence and clarifies their problems and potentialities. In other words, a popular tradition in literature implies a literature which looks at life from the point of view of the people seen not passively but actively.

It is because Dickens was able to develop such a point of view, such a sensibility, which saw the British people not simply as passive figures within a given social situation, but as an active force striving *against the ruling class* to fulfil their human potentialities that he was able to become the great popular writer that he is.

Writer and Public

Before coming to the final and essential question—in what ways does this popular sensibility find artistic expression in Dickens's novels—it is worth considering shortly three aspects of his achievement which, though they do not in themselves "explain" his status as a great popular writer (only the novels themselves in their unity of form and content can do that), throw some light on it.

(i) *The relationship of Dickens to his readers.* This was unusually close and the closeness was increased by the method of serial publication which Dickens, like most British novelists of his time, adopted. The novels appeared in monthly (or, in the case of *Hard Times*, weekly) instalments and the novelist had never finished writing a book before it had begun to be published and was often desperately keeping up with his time-schedule month by month. Hence the relevance of the letters from readers begging him not to let Little Nell die and so forth. It is easy to see only the ridiculous side of such a situation, but John Butt has put the issue effectively in his *Dickens at Work:*

> "To the author serial publication meant a larger public, but also a public more delicately responsive, who made their views known during the progress of a novel both by writing to him and by reducing or increasing their purchases. Through serial publication an author could recover something of the intimate relationship between storyteller and audience which existed in the age of the sagas and of Chaucer; and for an author like Dickens . . . this intimate relationship outweighed the inherent disadvantages of the system."

This point deserves emphasis, for it involves something important in any consideration of a genuine popular tradition—an attitude to art in which the audience is seen neither purely as consumer (the commercial relationship) nor as a superior group of like-minded spirits (the highbrow or *élite* relationship) but in an important sense as collaborator and equal. It involves of course a rejection of the extreme individualist attitude in which "self-expression", as opposed to the organisation of social experience, is seen as the object of art and in which the whole importance of communication is played down.

(ii) *Dickens's relationship to existing forms of popular culture.* Too little detailed work has yet been

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done on this subject, but it is not difficult to sense a number of profitable lines of exploration.

There is the absorption, for one thing, of the fairy-tale imagination of folk-lore. Quilp and Fagin, to say nothing of Squeers and Krook, are ogres; Betsey Trotwood (not to mention Brownlow or John Jarndyce) is a fairy godmother; Miss Havisham partakes of the tradition (given a sharp twist) of the sleeping beauty. The novels are full of witches and wicked uncles and Cinderellas and babes in the wood. I think the fairy-tale tradition, itself deeply rooted in the people's lives and hopes and difficulties, greatly helped Dickens to encompass artistically (perhaps fantastically is a richer word) the life he was faced with, and one of the marks of his triumphant absorption of this tradition is the fact that he has himself added so many characters and episodes to a popular mythology. British people at least do not have to have read *Martin Chuzzlewit* to know about Mrs. Gamp.

Then there is his closeness to contemporary cultural manifestations like the melodrama and the music-hall. Dickens's own passion for the theatre and his love of acting were not mere sidelines or exhibitionism. He felt thoroughly at home in Astley's Music Hall and his attitude to such entertainment was neither patronising, ironical or sentimental, though there is a whiff of the last two. The basic point is that Dickens enjoyed the popular theatre of his time, even parts of it which had little serious artistic value, because he responded to all forms of popular vitality and almost completely lacked the modern intellectual's attitude of aloof self-consciousness towards vulgarity. Dickens was vulgar.

Reading Aloud

(iii) *Art as a public activity*. It has been brought home to present-day Dickensians, largely through the success of Mr. Emlyn Williams's brilliant "readings", that the best milieu for the appreciation of Dickens is reading *aloud*. The novelist's own performances, so phenomenally successful in his later years, have been used by recent critics to illustrate elements of his personal desperation (his need for money to maintain his several households; the psychological need he is alleged to have tried to satisfy by the repeated reading of the blood-curdling Murder of Nancy) rather than to illuminate the nature of his novels. Public readings of the sort Dickens himself went in for are of course a special case, involving careful pruning and choice of subject-matter, but they do usefully remind us that novels can be read aloud and indeed were. In fact this habit of reading aloud, which Victorian families indulged in far more than their descendants of the television age, needs to be considered seriously by anyone trying to define the level of communication at which Dickens was aiming. It also underlines, incidentally, the real dilemma (which we tend to think of as a simple bit of British puritanism) involved in the need to avoid "bringing a blush to the cheek of the young person". I would suggest that the texture of Dickens's prose is, whether through conscious effort or not, perfectly adapted for reading aloud. At this level his wit, which is apt, in the demanding silence of private reading, to seem a trifle heavy-handed, the repetitiousness and underlining which the sophisticated reader often finds tiresome, turn out to be just right. Before we describe some of Dickens's effects as crude, let alone "sentimental", it is well to realise that we ourselves may sometimes be reading Dickens the wrong way.

I have mentioned a number of points all of which inevitably lead us towards the word popular when we consider Dickens's art; but I do not think any or all of these considerations, however important, is the chief reason for calling Dickens a great popular writer. For that we must look at the actual nature and content of the novels themselves. By this I do not mean of course merely their subject-matter—the material on which Dickens worked—but the total complex he created, which includes inextricably subject-matter (abstractable only in the sense that the fantastic world of a novel can and must *in the end* be related to the real world), organisation, rhetoric, and the writer's personal, controlling point-of-view.

Dickens's novels are fantasies, a series of images, complex but clear, difficult and at the same time simple, of significant areas of life in mid-nineteenth-century England, of human situations within that area which combine into a total situation or pattern or image which is the book. Sometimes the book is dominated by a single visualised image to which all else adheres—like the image of the Thames in *Our Mutual Friend*. Sometimes the image is best described in more abstract or intellectual terms—the titles of *Great Expectations* and *Hard Times* are revelatory of the kind of books they are. The total image or pattern of a Dickens novel is always concrete not theoretical, many-sided not flat, developing not static, historical not metaphysical. And the content is popular.

Critic of Capitalism

Dickens's attitude towards contemporary society developed in the course of his life. From the first he was deeply sympathetic to the common people though his failure, in the 1830's and 1840's, to recognise the significance of the Chartist movement is a measure of the weakness of his grasp of politics. As he grew older, however, he became more fully and consistently critical of the whole structure of capitalist society. One can see this clearly by comparing an early novel like *Oliver Twist* (1837–38) with later ones like *Bleak House* (1852–53) or

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Our Mutual Friend (1864–65) with its unforgettable portrait of the capitalist Mr. Podsnap and the whole system of Podsnappery. In all three books there is a burning indignation about the inhuman conditions in which ordinary people in nineteenth-century Britain lived. But whereas in the early novel the indignation is directed against specific institutions and abuses within contemporary society—the workhouses, the bureaucrats and magistrates—in the later novels it is the very structure and essence of that society that is revealed as monstrous and rotten.

In *Oliver Twist* the operation of the British legal system is attacked with tremendous passion, especially in the marvellous scene in which the Artful Dodger is tried and manages to deliver a broadside against class justice which is as profound as it is funny. But in *Bleak House* a far deeper revelation is at the heart of the novel. The Law itself —that British legal system which bourgeois theorists of the day were extolling as the high point of human achievement—is revealed as an essential part of a repressive state system based on property-relationships. And this is no casual insight but the basis upon which the whole vast novel, with its immensely complicated plot and teeming characters, is constructed. Dickens's development as an artist, though it is not altogether consistent, cannot be separated from the development of his social understanding. The relative aesthetic weakness of *Oliver Twist* is due to a weakness in Dickens's theoretical understanding —he cannot make up his mind whether he is for or against the bourgeois state and his ambiguous attitude gets reflected in the broken-backed structure of the novel.

It is remarkable that Dickens's critical understanding of capitalism as a system steadily increased at a time when the great majority of British writers—even those who thought of themselves as progressives —were coming to terms with that society. In the 1830's and 1840's—years of appalling poverty and sharp class battles—it was not surprising that many novelists felt, directly or indirectly, the intense pressures of the social situation and tended to identify themselves with the forces critical of the established order. This is the period of the Brontës, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, Disraeli. But the 1850's and 1860's were a period of capitalist prosperity and the indignation of the writers was, for the most part, blunted by the success of the system. Charles Kingsley, a socialist, was quite bowled over by the Great Exhibition of 1851; George Eliot, translator of Feuerbach and Strauss, and intellectually far more daring in her thought than Dickens, seems in her novels almost overwhelmed by the apparent impregnability of the British social order. But Dickens hated capitalism when it was working well even more than when it was in a state of obvious crisis. *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend* are, artistically, his supreme achievements. To the marvellous vitality and humorous perception of the early novels have been added a new dimension—a deep, consistent social analysis which emerges not only in the organisation and structure of these novels but in their most haunting imagery. Dickens remains in these last books, with his persistent underlying optimism, a great comic writer; but there is also a tragic intensity deep in his picture of a corrupt and heartless society.

It is capitalist Britain that is the bleak house of Dickens's title. The prison in *Little Dorrit*, the enormous refuse-heaps and the filthy river of *Our Mutual Friend* are images—concrete yet bristling with intellectual implications—of a whole society over which Mr. Podsnap presides. *Great Expectations*, as Bernard Shaw rightly used to insist, is perhaps the most thoroughgoing attack on the acquisitive society in all British nineteenth-century literature.

On the Side of the People

The artistic profundity of Dickens's novels, especially the later ones, has been consistently underemphasised by the great majority of bourgeois critics. Of recent years the situation has improved through the work, which one welcomes sincerely, of Edgar Johnson in America, Sylvère Monod in France and John Butt, Humphry House and Jack Lindsay in Britain, and one must certainly not forget T. A. Jackson's *Charles Dickens: The Progress of a Radical*, a splendid pioneering study from a Marxist viewpoint. But by and large the emphasis in critical work on Dickens has been thoroughly misleading, concentrating on the idiosyncrasies of Dickens's fictional characters and on the alleged sentimentality of the novelist. It is true of course that Dickens was not without his sentimentalities—or his illusions. But the tendency to escape from harsh realities into a comforting fairy-tale world presided over by a fairy godmother (even so human a one as Betsey Trotwood) is not the most important aspect of his work and was, in any case, one which decreased as his social insights deepened. Mr. Jarndyce in *Bleak House* seems at first glance to play much the same role (that of the kindly wealthy patron whose generosity and goodness can smooth out the pain of class injustice) as Mr. Brownlow in *Oliver Twist*, but in fact Jarndyce is presented far more critically and subtly than Brownlow, and by the time we get to *Our Mutual Friend* the fairy-godfather character has been transformed into the superb figure of Mr. Boffin, perhaps Dickens's greatest affirmation of confidence in the practical integrity of the common people.

To say that Dickens was on the side of the People against the ruling class is not in itself to explain his

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quality as an artist. But it is the necessary basis to any objective appreciation of that quality. For it is from his artistic point-of-view, his overall sensibility as man and writer, that his greatness as a novelist ultimately stems. It is because he wrote from a point-of-view which was, in the deepest, most searching implications of the word, popular, that he was able to look at the British people in the way he did, to look at squalor and misery and degradation and see at the same time vitality and courage and hope, to lead at one and the same time to laughter and indignation. Dickens was able to face unneurotically the worst in humanity because he also saw and presented the best. And perhaps this is why he is of all English writers after Shakespeare the greatest and most loved.

Ancient Philosophy and the Class Struggle

George Thomson

LAST December there appeared in this journal, under the title *More on Ancient Indian Materialism*, a tribute to D. P. Chattopadhyaya's book *Lokayata* (1959) from N. P. Anikeev of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. With all that he says in praise of this fine book I am in wholehearted agreement.

In particular, I welcome the following:

> Of course, these general laws of the philosophical process had a number of specific peculiarities on Indian soil. The most important of these was that here the philosophical problems are resolved to a significant degree on the basis of the mythological material of pre-class society, which for a comparatively long time remained their arsenal and breeding ground; this is exactly what Engels called the "prehistoric content" of philosophy. And in examining the philosophical systems of class societies, it is quite understandable that an analysis of the specific importance and persistence of contemporary but genetically far more ancient forms of the world outlook of primitive society; a demonstration of how these permeate the developed ideology of later epochs, and even the real content and part played in later philosophical systems—all this is an important and necessary feature in investigating the history of Indian philosophy. In this connection D. P. Chattopadhyaya has carried out much useful work, the significance of which it is hard to exaggerate.

Anikeev is right to acclaim the author's achievement in revealing for the first time the transition from mythology to philosophy in Indian thought. This process, however, was by no means confined to India. It has long been known that a similar transition lies behind Greek and Chinese philosophy. Do Anikeev and his colleagues accept this? It is an important question, calling for a clear answer, because, as I will try to show, a great deal depends on it.

Why Study Ancient Philosophy?

Why do we study ancient philosophy? I have given what I believe to be the correct answer to this question in my preface to the Russian edition of *The First Philosophers* (1959):

> The struggle for socialism and communism is not merely a struggle to reorganise the process of material production and the structure of society. It is also a struggle to change the minds of men, and in particular to dispel the illusions of class society, which still blind us to the infinite possibilities of development that await mankind with the transition to communism. We shall be able to dispel those illusions all the more effectively if we understand the historical conditions in which they were created.

In other words, we must study ancient society in such a way as to reveal the emergence of those "common forms or general ideas" which, as stated in the *Communist Manifesto*, are common to all epochs of class society.

In the pursuit of this aim there is, of course, a great deal to be learnt directly from Marx and Engels, deeply versed as they were in European philosophy. With oriental philosophy, however, the case is rather different. Even the best bourgeois work in this field suffers from a grave lack of historical understanding. Hence the importance of Chattopadhyaya's book and the work now being done in China. We have now the possibility of organising a concerted attack on ancient Greek, ancient Indian and ancient Chinese philosophy. Starting from our general understanding of the historical process involved in

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the transition from primitive to ancient society, we must analyse those "common forms or general ideas" as they emerged out of primitive thought in their different manifestations in Greece, India and China. In this way these three fields, which in bourgeois scholarship have always been studied in isolation from one another, will be unified, and the whole domain of ancient philosophy will be captured by historical materialism.

It is clear that Anikeev is aware of these possibilities, for at the close of his article he refers to the formation of "a united front of Marxist scholars from different countries in the study of the ancient period of the spiritual development of mankind". In order to exploit them, however, it is necessary not only that we should define our aims as precisely as possible, but also—even more important—that we should reach full agreement in respect of our theoretical method. It is from this point of view that I wish to criticise certain reservations made by Anikeev in his appreciation of Chattopadhyaya's book and also certain formulations regarding ancient philosophy in the new Soviet textbook, *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* (English edition, 1961). It seems to me that in both cases there is a dangerous tendency to treat the development of the ideological superstructure in isolation from the social and economic relations which it reflects.

Basis and Superstructure

First of all, let it be made quite clear that, according to Marxism, the interconnection between the ideological superstructure and the economic basis is complex and indirect, being mediated by the relations of production. This matter is discussed by Engels in *Ludwig Feuerbach*. After showing how the growth of the state gives rise to legal ideas, which are then developed systematically by the jurists, in whose minds the juristic form becomes everything and the economic content nothing, he goes on:

> Still higher ideologies, that is, such as are still further removed from the material, economic basis, take the form of philosophy and religion. Here the interconnection between the ideas and their material conditions of existence becomes more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediate links. But the interconnection exists. (Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 464).

After some further remarks on philosophy and religion he concludes:

> We see, therefore, that religion, once formed, always contains traditional material, just as in all ideological domains tradition forms a great conservative force. But the transformations which this material undergoes spring from class relations, that is to say, out of the economic relations of the persons who execute these transformations. (p. 468).

From this it follows that the "traditional material" of religion, philosophy, law and every other ideological domain, no matter how highly elaborated by its exponents, no matter how far it may develop an inner logic of its own, must always be studied historically, because only in that way can we find the key to its origin and development.

Engels returns to the subject in one of his letters, where he deals in passing with the ideology of primitive society:

> As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher into the air, religion, philosophy, etc., these have a prehistoric stock, found already in existence and taken over in the historical period, of what we should today call bunk. These various false conceptions of nature, of man's own being, of spirits, magic forces, etc., have for the most part only a negative economic basis; but the low economic development of the prehistoric period is supplemented and also partially conditioned and even caused by the false conceptions of nature. And even though economic necessity was the main driving force of the progressive knowledge of nature and becomes ever more so, it would surely be pedantic to try and find economic causes for all this primitive nonsense. The history of science is the history of the gradual clearing away of this nonsense or of its replacement by fresh but already less absurd nonsense. The people who deal with this belong in their turn to special spheres in the division of labour and appear to themselves to be working in an independent field. And in so far as they form an independent group within the social division of labour, in so far do their productions, including their errors, react back as an influence upon the whole development of society, even on its economic development. But all the same they themselves remain under the dominating influence of economic development. (*Selected Works*, Vol. I, pp. 386–7).

First Materialists

Here his remarks may be supplemented in the light of what is now known of totemism, the characteristic ideology of tribal society, which had not been discovered in his day. The form in which this "prehistoric stock" of false conceptions was taken over by civilised society was not its primitive form; it had already, in the higher stages of tribal society, begun to disintegrate in response to the emergence of incipient class contradictions, and with the advent of class society this process of disintegration and distortion was carried still further by the priesthood. Moreover, along with these false conceptions, reflecting the low economic level, it contained also certain positive elements, reflecting the economic and social relations of primitive communism. I refer to such ideas as the idea of growth through division, of perpetual change, of the conflict and interpenetration of opposites. These ideas, expressed in mythical form, constitute the crude proto-materialism of primitive society, reflecting the unity, at a low economic level, of theory and practice and the

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absence of class antagonisms. And in Greece, India and China alike, these ideas were taken over, re-interpreted and transformed into the first theories of philosophical materialism.

Historical Determination

Let us now turn to Anikeev, who presents the matter in a somewhat different light:

> The strong side of the book and its scientific merit is to be found in the fact that the author steadfastly holds to the Marxist principle of materialistic determinism in his analysis of the early forms of Indian philosophy, and reveals their dependence on the conditions of life of society; he constantly emphasises that the objective world is reflected in the human consciousness only by passing through the prism of social relationships and social practice. But D. P. Chattopadhyaya underestimates the fact that for Marxist research into the history of philosophy this principle is not sufficient by itself, that it is necessarily supplemented by another principle important from the methodological point of view in analysing spiritual phenomena—namely, the necessity of considering also social consciousness (and above all in forms so remote from its economic basis as philosophy and religion) as giving rise to relatively independent phenomena not directly and spontaneously emerging from the character of social relations.

It seems to me that this second principle is only valid to the extent that it is included in the first. Perhaps that is what Anikeev means when he speaks of it as "supplementing" the first. Of course, in analysing the mature forms of a philosophy, it is not *enough* to trace them back to their primitive origins; we must go on to analyse their further development and show how, for all their apparent independence, they reflect the further development of society itself. If that is what Anikeev means, it is true and not denied; but his second principle is formulated in such a way as to suggest that he may mean something different.

Later on he re-states his position as follows. Referring to the ideas of *prakriti* and *purusha*, he writes:

> Of course, one cannot deny the probability that historically the roots of these concepts go back to the social relations pointed out by the author. But philosophical analysis requires above all that the real function of these categories be taken into account; the conceptual functions fulfilled by them; the objective contradictions of the process of cognition of reality resolved with their help; relations of reality which are refracted by theoretical thought through the prism of its own laws and which are assimilated by it in concepts, categories and constructions specific to it.

Here his first principle is presented as though it were separable from the second and subordinate to it; and so it appears that the main task of the historian of philosophy is not historical at all but consists in the "philosophical analysis" of these "relatively independent phenomena" as such. If this is what Anikeev means, it is incorrect. The principle of historical determination applies not only to the origin of ideas but to the whole course of their development, and not only to the elements of falsehood which they contain but also to the elements of truth; for, although the truth itself is not historically determined, our knowledge of it is. A true theory does not differ from a false theory in being "free" from historical determination, but in corresponding to objective reality. This is pointed out by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism:*

> In a word, every ideology is historically conditional, but it is unconditionally true that to every scientific ideology (as distinct, for instance, from religious ideology) there corresponds an objective truth, absolute nature. . . . (*Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 198).

At this point, it seems to me, if I have understood him aright, Anikeev has parted company with historical materialism and taken up a position indistinguishable from that of bourgeois philosophers who treat philosophy as a closed system of pure thought.

Points in "The Fundamentals"

Let me now turn to the *Fundamentals*. In this comprehensive textbook there is no account of oriental philosophy, just as there is no account of oriental society—surely, a serious omission, giving to the whole work a European bias that is already out of date. There are, however, in Chapter I, Section I, a few paragraphs about Greek philosophy, and it is on these I wish to comment.

On page 22 we read:

> In ancient Greece, the reactionary aristocrats destroyed the works of the materialist philosopher Democritus, the founder of the atomic theory of matter, who rejected divine intervention in human affairs. Another materialist philosopher, Anaxagoras, was banished from Athens as an atheist.

The works of Democritus were still extant in the second century A.D. There is no evidence that they were destroyed by "reactionary aristocrats", whoever they may have been, or that they were deliberately destroyed at all. The story about the banishment of Anaxagoras is not very well authenticated; but, if it is true, the initiative came from the opponents of Pericles, whose protégé he was; and these were not "reactionary aristocrats", as the wording of this passage might be taken to imply, but radical democrats, though I should hesitate to

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describe them as progressive, because in this context the distinction has very little meaning.

In the next paragraph we read:

> The ancient Greek materialist philosopher Epicurus, a disciple of Democritus, revered by the ancients for having liberated man from the fear of God and for asserting the validity of science, was for two thousand years anathematised by the leaders of the Church, who falsely depicted him as an enemy of morality and a disseminator of vice.

Epicurus was revered by his own disciples, but not by anyone else. He was being denounced as a "disseminator of vice" long before the introduction of Christianity. For example, two of his disciples were expelled from Rome in 173 B.C. for "introducing pleasures".

Democritus and Epicurus are presented here, along with Anaxagoras, as the great representatives of ancient science. Strictly speaking, however, they were not scientists at all, but natural philosophers, their doctrines being based on rational speculation, not on observation and experiment. The pioneers of scientific investigation were Hippocrates, who was a medical practitioner opposed to the philosophers, and Aristotle, who was a pupil of Plato and an idealist. In order to explain these contradictions it is necessary to study the evolution of philosophy as a dialectical process reflecting the evolution of society itself: in other words, we must study it concretely and historically, using our dialectical method as a guiding thread. Otherwise the result can only be a vulgarisation of Marxism.

In the next paragraph we read:

> The famous Alexandria library, which housed 700,000 works of the writers and scientists of antiquity, was burnt by Christian monks in A.D. 391. Pope Gregory I (A.D. 590–604), an inveterate enemy of secular science and learning, destroyed many valuable works of ancient authors, notably the works of materialist philosophers.

Christianity

The library at Alexandria is believed to have been destroyed in the course of an attack on the Temple of Serapis, which was scarcely a scientific institute. But the facts are disputed. It is not certain that it was destroyed at this date, or indeed by the Christians at all. Some leaders of the Church, such as Photius the Patriarch and Arethas of Caesarea, were patrons of classical learning who helped to preserve the ancient writings. In any case, these writings embodied the ideology of the old slave society, whereas the Church stood for the new feudal society. Which of these was reactionary and which was progressive?

The section from which these quotations are taken carries the heading: "The Development of Progressive Materialist Science in Struggle Against Reaction and Ignorance". No references are given for further reading and so there is nothing to direct the reader's attention to Engels' article, "On the Early History of Christianity", in which he wrote:

> The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working-class movement. Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people; it first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of peoples subjugated or dispersed by Rome. Both Christianity and the workers' socialism preached forthcoming salvation from bondage and misery; Christianity places this salvation in a life beyond, after death, in heaven; socialism places it in this world, in a transformation of the social order. Both are persecuted and baited, their adherents are despised and made the object of exclusive laws, the former as enemies of the human race, the latter as enemies of the state, enemies of religion, the family, the social order. And in spite of all persecution, nay, even spurred on by it, they forge victoriously, irresistibly ahead. Three hundred years after its appearance Christianity was the recognised state religion in the Roman world empire, and in barely sixty years socialism has won itself a position which makes its victory absolutely certain. (*Marx and Engels On Religion*, p. 313.)

To this it may be added that in its mediaeval form Christianity "was in correspondence to the needs of the time", being "the religious counterpart to feudalism". (Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 466.)

Thus, according to Engels, early Christianity embodied the hopes and aspirations of the exploited masses heralding a new stage in the evolution of society; but according to the authors of *Fundamentals* it represented the forces of ignorance and reaction. Disregarding Engels, they take their stand with Edward Gibbon. They should have heeded Lenin's warning:

> We must not in any circumstances fall into the abstract and idealist error of arguing the religious question from the standpoint of "reason", apart from the class struggle, as is not infrequently done by bourgeois radical democrats. ("Socialism and Religion," *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 661.)

That is what the authors of *Fundamentals* have done. They have taken the conflict between science and religion out of its historical context and presented it as an abstraction; and in so doing they have abandoned the position of dialectical and historical materialism.

Similar weaknesses could be pointed out in other chapters. Some of these might have been avoided if the work of non-Soviet Marxists had not been so persistently ignored. The influence of bourgeois ideology penetrates all boundaries and presents a special danger to intellectuals cut off from practical

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activities. Further, so far as ancient philosophy is concerned, it is necessary to insist that creative work in this field can only be done by those who are historians as well as philosophers and are fully qualified in the ancient languages.

Creative Marxist

It is refreshing to turn back to Chattopadhyaya's book, because it is the work of a creative Marxist, who knows and loves his subject. Let me conclude by quoting from his Introduction:

> There remains only one other question that I would like to answer in this Introduction. Looking back at the argument in its entirety, what value, from the Marxist point of view, do I propose to attach to it? Of course, the significance of the Sankhya in the Indian philosophical tradition is discussed in its proper place. But what is the significance of the primitive proto-materialism, which forms the substratum of both the Lokayata and the Vedic traditions? My answer is simple enough. Its value is comparable to the recognition of primitive communism in Marxism. The Marxists emphasise the importance of primitive communism not because they dream of a return to it. The purpose is rather to show that private property and the state machinery are not eternal adjuncts to human existence: "They will fall as inevitably as they arose at an earlier stage" (Engels). Similarly, the primitive proto-materialism is discussed, not for the purpose of a glorification of it, and surely there is not even the remotest apology for any return to it. Yet it has its value by way of showing that the spiritualistic outlook is not innate in man. It too will be finally washed away as inevitably as it arose at an earlier stage: if the spiritualistic outlook came into being, it will also, along with the social separation between manual and mental labour, pass away. This has some particular relevance for the understanding of the Indian philosophical tradition. For we are never tired of listening that spiritualism is an inherent feature of Indian thought. But, "Ah! Faustus, now hast thou but one bare hour to live!"

This inspiring statement of our aims provides, in my opinion, the correct theoretical basis for further advance on all three sectors of our united front.

Some Problems of Teaching English

Margaret Cohen

FOR the obvious reason that English is our own language, its teaching lies at the heart of all teaching and permeates every other subject. The problems that arise are the concern not only of those directly involved in the teaching of English, but of all teachers, at every stage from primary school to university; they are a challenge to all who love our language, value our literature, and want to see both preserved in all their richness and vitality.

Within the last year, two important books have been published which pose and attempt to answer some of the problems[1]—*English for Maturity*, by David Holbrook, and *English in Education* edited by Brian Jackson and Denys Thompson. They deal not only with the questions of content and method that for many years have been the subject of vigorous controversy amongst practising teachers, but with the alarming and urgent situation that has arisen from what Denys Thompson describes as "a development actively hostile to the teaching of English; the degree to which children have become the target of a commercial environment". In this article I want to examine some aspects of the teaching of English at the present time and to consider the contribution made by Holbrook and others.

If English is considered first as a subject, like others to be taught in the schools, it is obvious that its scope presents special problems. There can be no clearly laid down syllabus, no body of *fact* to be taught, no clearly defined "content". Faced with large classes, it is small wonder that so many teachers of English never see clearly where they are going, but stumble on, first in one direction, then in another. It is all rather like trying to stop up holes in a leaky boat—a bit of punctuation practice here, a grammar lesson there, a session on how to write a letter applying for a job, then a lesson or so based on some textbook with plenty of "comprehension" and "vocabulary" exercises. Of course some Literature

[1]David Holbrook—*English for Maturity*, C.U.P., 11s. 6d.; Brian Jackson and Denys Thompson (Editors) —*English in Education*, Chatto & Windus, 21s.

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must be fitted in, some "good books" ought to be read (the classics?) a poem or two when the teacher is feeling strong and at some point in the school year the class ought to struggle through some Shakespeare! Once a week they should write the inevitable composition or essay, and if, as is most likely, G.C.E. "O" level is the ultimate aim, there must be a weekly or fortnightly précis.

In this dreary soul-destroying grind against adverse conditions, in a climate of opinion frequently hostile to good reading, with increasing and ugly competition outside the school, it is easy to become despairing or cynical or both. The great contribution of the two books under review is the confidence expressed that, in spite of all the difficulties, our mother tongue and literature *can* be successfully and vitally taught, that the battle against what Brian Jackson calls "an erosive environment" *can* be won. David Holbrook writes primarily of work and possibilities in the secondary modern school, and although, as I shall attempt to show later, I consider some of his suggestions impractical and some of his attitudes unacceptable to Marxists, his book has the great virtue that it is based on a fundamental optimism and an unshakable confidence in children. *English in Education* is a selection of articles that have appeared over a number of years in the journal *The Use of English*. Both books contain a great deal that is of interest to teachers of English, but they also range over questions relating to our people, our language and our culture today, which are of wide and urgent interest.

Common Aims

Perhaps at this point some attempt should be made to state some common aims in the teaching of English. I imagine that everyone would agree that one aim is *literacy* in the fullest sense—the ability to express oneself clearly, to be fully articulate in speech and in writing, together with the capacity to read widely and to enjoy reading. Alongside this must surely go some knowledge and appreciation of the great literature of the past. The person who is inarticulate is handicapped in life; the person who knows little or nothing of our cultural heritage is deprived. The weakness of nearly all of the writers in these two books is that they fail to see the deeper, underlying causes in society of this increasing process of deprivation.

Before I go on to examine these causes and the partial failure of the writers mentioned to meet the problems they see and depict so clearly, it would be worth glancing at extracts from children's original work included in *English in Education*. I shall quote only two here, but would urge everyone interested in children's writing to read the chapter called *A Gathering of Voices*.

"*Diary*

'Yesterdav I ran in the school sports. First it was the shuttle, then it was the flat race. First it was me, and then it was Charly and he lost because he kept looking round and I won the final. . . . When I got home I had some hot milk and some cornflakes. Then I got undressed and then I washed my face and cleaned my teeth and had my coff-micksture, then my mummy held my hands together and said Good night, the Champion of this house. Then I went up the stairs and got into bed and said to my mummy night-night, and I went to sleep, and I had a hot and exciting night, but I got to sleep eventually and I had good dreams too.'

Andrew, aged 7."

"*Frost*

'A cart has clawed a track and frost has cracked and cut
The clay which brittle grass
Will clutch, till sap is spent
By bites of wind, which whisk all warmth to cold and chill;
When spiky frost will
Prick and probe stone walls
And gull will pierce an icy air with shrieking calls.'

Girl, aged 17."

In these two extracts, chosen almost at random, we see illustrated a third aim in English teaching—to encourage the child to write creatively and with enjoyment, whether out of experience or imagination. How far removed are these pieces of writing from the dreary, pen-chewing weekly essay task which is still the lot of too many schoolchildren!

One of the first problems, then, is how to teach the child to express himself clearly and successfully, and several contributions to *English in Education* stress the importance of *reading* here. How many of us remember being taught to spell, punctuate and construct a sentence? We learnt, for better for worse, from the books we read. The textbook planned courses, with vocabulary, punctuation and other exercises may assist in the process and, probably more important, provide a ready-made lesson for an over-worked teacher, but it is generally found that children who read widely and are used to the verbal exchange of ideas, can express themselves fluently in speech and in writing. Yet in neither of the books under consideration is the *class* aspect of this problem clearly recognised.

Class Aspects

In no other "subject" does one child start out with such an advantage over others, an advantage which is his not merely from the time his formal school education begins, but from the moment he first learns to talk. The child who grows up in a home where from his earliest days he sees books read and hears them discussed, where a wide vocabulary is in

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daily use, where new ideas and words are constantly explained to him, where adults tell him stories and introduce him to reading, and where later on he listens and learns to take part in all kinds of discussion, begins and passes through his school life with enormous advantages which he owes almost entirely to his social background. Nowhere are these advantages more clearly revealed than in the English lesson, as every teacher will know, and expecially those who have taught in both grammar and secondary modern schools.

The child from the "educated" home will usually have a wide vocabulary, a verbal facility, frequently accompanied by an apparent poise and confidence. In contrast, many working-class children appear inarticulate and diffident, and these differences deepen as they approach secondary school age. Separation of grammar and modern schools and "streaming" within the schools serve to sharpen these social and class divisions still further. All this of course creates problems for teaching in all subjects, but especially in the teaching of English, and most of all in the secondary school, where the teacher has to contend with the handicap resulting from neglect of reading during the most vital formative years and often with sheer poverty of verbal and written expression. Sybil Marshall, in a most interesting article on *English Idiom in the Primary School* (*English in Education*), writes of the "linguistic snobbery" that besets us both in the schools and in the world outside and of "the false sense of respectability" which is leading to the loss of much that is rich and vivid in working-class idiom, especially in the countryside. Yet the problem of regional and local dialect is not a simple one, when the teacher knows full well that the child is going out into a class-ridden society where "Standard English" is clearly seen by many children and their parents as a desirable objective.

What should be our attitude to this problem? I believe it should be one of encouragement of vivid and expressive idiom in speech and in writing, and of respect for vigorous working-class expression. Our aim should never be to teach the children to "talk posh", as I have heard so many of them put it with healthy contempt. At the same time I am not entirely happy about my own utilitarian approach, when I tell a child that his way of saying or writing something is just as good, if not better, than the accepted or "standard" way, but, unfortunately will not be accepted by the majority of examiners and employers. Most children seem to accept this kind of double standard in the same way that they accept and practise a dual form of speech and accent—one for the classroom and formal occasions, the other for playground and home. Whatever attitude we adopt as teachers, we cannot isolate our teaching in the classroom from the world outside, in which examination successes and jobs loom large.

Undoubtedly external examinations present one of the biggest problems. In the final chapter of *English in Education* Thompson writes bitterly of the "extent to which the examination system has spread and strengthened its grip" and of the flow of textbooks resulting from it which "choke the life out of teaching". I believe that he is right when he states that "the best of English teaching cannot be examined". Sybil Marshall, in the article already referred to, emphasises the deadly and deadening effect on primary schools of preparation for the "eleven-plus", while secondary school teachers could write as feelingly about the G.C.E. "O" Level examination in English Language. Especially for the verbally less able children, this means hours of dreary practice in essay writing, of struggling with précis, at hateful and artificial "comprehension" questions, and of exercises in preparation for the frequently pointless questions involving grammar, syntax and vocabulary which go to make up the rest of the examination paper. A boy or girl may take and fail the examination twice, or three times, for of all subjects in the G.C.E. "O" Level, English Language is the one most generally required by employers, and for further education.

Examinations

The work involved, especially for those who have to make several attempts, is calculated to kill any love of language or literature. Realising this, Holbrook has based most of his book on the unfortunately wrong assumption that English teaching in the Secondary Modern School can flourish, free from what he calls "the mill-like grinding drive of examination". Has he not noticed that more and more secondary modern schools are boasting of their successes in the G.C.E., and has he not heard of Beloe? The hard fact is, I believe, that while fighting to modify and improve the examination system we are teaching children who are going out into society as it is.

I see no alternative but to work as best we can within the examination system whilst seeking every possible means to shape and modify existing examinations in the interests of the majority of the children. We cannot debar any child from possible success in an examination which may mean the opening of a door to him in a highly competitive society. *We can and must see that the teaching of English is not dominated by the dictates of the examination* and there is much in *English in Education* which can help a teacher towards this end. As Marxists, we must at the same time intensify our fight against competitive capitalist society itself, so that more and more progressive teachers will begin

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to understand what are the roots of an examination system they rightly detest. For the weakness of so many is that they argue against examination-competition within the framework of a competitive system.

We have to show them that the examination system in its present form is an integral part of a class system of education and of society. Our social system depends on artificial and largely class-based selection, and selection in turn depends on examination. The eleven-plus selects those who shall have the privilege of grammar school education. The G.C.E. "O" Level in general weeds out those who are to go no further after sixteen years of age. G.C.E. "A" Level determines who shall have the university places.

Grammar

Meanwhile there is a great deal of interesting material in both books about new teaching techniques, especially those concerned with encouraging children to write spontaneously. This kind of "free writing" marks a welcome departure from the conventional essay and from what one contributor calls "the more disciplined forms of writing". The teacher provides some starting-point; it may be a picture, a sound, a short poem read to the class, or a suggested situation involving, for instance, fear or loneliness. Then the children are left to write "freely", as the occasion moves them and the results are sometimes remarkable.

I think it must be recognised that this kind of experimental work may be more difficult with the more sophisticated urban child, but it is well worth trying, and I have myself attempted it with varying degrees of success in a Middlesex secondary modern school. It is a method that can be used from time to time and provides a welcome change from more routine teaching. In fact it is the kind of work that can be undertaken by a teacher who *is* determined that examinations shall not always dominate his lessons. It is significant that Mrs. Langdon was preparing her class for an external examination and devoted only one half-hour period a week to this experiment.

Alongside teaching and encouraging children to write, whether it be "free writing", imaginative composition, or the more formal essay in preparation for examinations, goes the secondary aim. The formal aids to expression have to be acquired: punctuation, spelling and grammar. The place that formal grammar should occupy in teaching has been a matter of controversy over the years. Since it is probably of less interest to those who are not practising teachers than many other aspects of the teaching of English, I shall only pose the problem and give my own opinion. An interesting article by A. A. Evans in *English in Education* shows that the case for and against the teaching of formal grammar in English lessons has been argued in more or less the same terms for forty years. It is surely time that the question was resolved, for the present position is chaotic, as Evans points out.

The amount and nature of formal grammar taught varies from school to school, from year to year, from teacher to teacher, according to his inclination or conscience. In another important and closely-reasoned article R. J. Harris proves conclusively, in my opinion, that formal grammar in the secondary school completely fails to achieve the purposes for which it is supposed to be taught, except as a rather shaky preparation for one or two specific grammar questions in the G.C.E. He maintains that "children learn to communicate by communicating; always it is the *meaning* (my italics) of the word that matters . . . the grammatical term, being a stage further removed from the fact of meaning, is a distraction, not an aid to correct usage." He disposes of the argument that formal grammar provides a training in logical and abstract thought, is a useful "discipline", and so on, and comes to the conclusion that it should not be taught in schools, except possibly as part of linguistic study in the sixth form. Since A. A. Evans is writing of grammar school children, Holbrook rightly shows that grammar teaching is even more puzzling and irrelevant in the modern school. He suggests in chapter 12 of his book a simple approach to a bare minimum of grammatical terms, confined to function of words in a sentence, which I think is well worth consideration. Finally, when Mr. Evans asserts that "most teachers of English get the knowledge of the grammar they teach from what they remember of their own schooldays and from the textbooks they have to use with their classes". I am delighted to find my own experience and suspicions confirmed! Most teaching of grammar is haphazard, face-saving and useless, and when there is so much crying out to be read and discussed, we simply cannot waste time on it.

Turning to Books

It is to books rather than grammatical exercises that we must turn, for it is hardly possible to over-emphasise the extent to which the reading habits of children—and adults too—have been distorted and debased. There is a vast readership for the gutter press, comics, magazines of all kinds, and for the flood of paper-backs, ranging from sensational rubbish to pornography, which pours in and out of hundreds of newspaper and book shops. This onslaught, backed up by every kind of slick and spurious advertisement, by "pop" records, cinema and television, represents the burning of the books in our time. The good and the great books are still there, but for millions they have been effectively

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destroyed. This situation represents a tremendous challenge to the teacher of English. What then should we attempt to read in the classroom, and what kind of books should we encourage children to read? Here, Holbrook's chapter on Reading, with its appendix of book lists is the most interesting and controversial part of his book and should be considered by everyone concerned with the state of reading today. In choosing novels and plays to read in school, the teacher finds himself constantly torn between what he feels *ought* to be read, and what in fact "goes down", and we shall all have different opinions and experiences concerning which of the accepted classics can be successfully read with children. For example, I do not share Holbrook's enthusiasm for *Huckleberry Finn* as "the perfect story". Yet I have found *Jane Eyre* invariably successful, while he condemns it as unsuitable, "emotionally adult and overdone". I am speaking now of novels to be read in the classroom, and here it is obvious, as in the teaching of poetry, that the teacher's own taste and enthusiasm play a great part in the communication of enjoyment to the child. Moreover, it is difficult to generalise, because what will succeed with one class in a particular school, will fail in another; what will be enjoyed by a class of girls may prove a disastrous failure in a mixed class.

Some children whose homes have made them less vulnerable to the commercial environment, will read a great deal on their own, and may need only suggestions and guidance. I have taught in secondary modern schools where everything seemed to depend on my own reading aloud to the class, where the children appeared to look forward eagerly to each reading session, yet complained that when left to read on their own they found the same book dull and difficult. But I felt that at least a beginning had been made. One can only keep on trying and experimenting, being prepared to draw back if an obviously mistaken choice has been made for a particular group of children. Constantly before the teacher must be the aim of bringing the children by one means or another into touch with something of their cultural heritage. Yet the criterion must always be one of enjoyment. If some people are shocked to know that many children leave school without having read a single play of Shakespeare, I would say that it is even more disquieting that so many leave school having been so bored by class reading or acting of Shakespeare that they are quite determined never to read or see another of his plays. We should never forget that plays are meant to be acted and no opportunity of taking children to see a good production of a Shakespeare play should be missed. Nor, I believe, should we be superior, as Holbrook is, about film and television versions, for they too can help enormously in bringing a play to life in the classroom. In London of course we are fortunate in possibilities for theatre visits and I shall never forget taking a mixed party of fairly tough fifteen-year-old secondary modern children to the Zefforelli production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Old Vic. They were spell-bound; the general comment afterwards, "Fabulous!"

What should be our attitude to abridged versions of plays and novels? Holbrook condemns all those which make alterations in the actual text, and I agree that this amounts to a betrayal of both writer and child. Nevertheless, I believe it better to read, for instance, some scenes from plays of Shakespeare, rather than none at all and with classes where it would have been quite impossible to take a play in its entirety, I have adopted this method.

I think one should make the same kind of approach to the great novels of the past, and here again I have found that film and television serialised versions, however far they fall short in other respects, are of very real assistance in arousing children's interests. For this reason I think Holbrook is wrong to condemn them because so often they distort the text and even the story. "Telly" can often provide a jumping-off ground to something much more worthwhile and, in passing, I would say that there is a place for discussion of all kinds of television programmes in the English lesson. Again, there is the problem of the length of the nineteenth-century novel, and for reading with a class I have always done my own "cutting", filling in the story as I go along and never reading anything but the original text. I shall conclude by listing some of the accepted classics which I have found children at various stages in various secondary schools, have most enjoyed, either in whole or in part. I have already mentioned *Jane Eyre*. *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* I have found to be the most popular of Dickens'. *Pride and Prejudice* was at least partially successful, and *The Mill on the Floss* and *Lorna Doone* (considerably abridged by myself) were both greatly enjoyed by girls. I note that Holbrook frowns on *Lorna Doone* but I find myself in complete agreement with his estimate of *Wuthering Heights* as the perfect book for the child of fourteen or fifteen. On quite another plane, Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* I have found excellent material for unabridged class reading. I am aware that this is a "hit and miss" list and each teacher will have his own preferences, but I agree with Holbrook that in spite of all the difficulties, we should not give up the struggle to create "with as many of our children as possible, a taste for reading the best prose written in English". We should be bold, too, in introducing poetry into the classroom although here, I must say that I found Holbrook unhelpful. His approach to poetry seems to me to be altogether too mystical and his enthusiasm for the use of folk song and mediaeval

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drama in schools unrealistic. But when he writes:

> "Teaching poetry is at the centre of English, and yet it is something you cannot do unless you find joy in it. A teacher can only teach the poems he or she likes: there is no joy or purpose in teaching a poem you loathe out of a sense of duty because you are told it is a 'classic'."

he is stating what every teacher of English knows in his heart to be true. In this field, therefore, more than any other, one feels hesitant to exhort or advise. I would only say that I personally have found that with older children, twentieth-century poetry is the best medium. Contemporary idiom and themes evoke an immediate response.

Recently I heard, quite by chance, a most revealing radio discussion between successful authors of popular children's fiction. W. E. Johns, author of the tremendously popular "Biggles" books, said smugly: "Let the children have what they want. They're the judges." Later in the discussion Enid Blyton replied coyly to a question, "Yes, there should be a moral, but it shouldn't be too educational or children will regard it as a *school book*" (my italics).

The Teacher's Dilemma

I think these two chance comments throw considerable light on the dilemma facing the teacher of English today. We have to try to encourage the habit of reading and at the same time to raise standards. In this connection I think that Holbrook is wrong to dismiss as worthless and even harmful the novels of contemporary writers like Neville Shute, Paul Brickhill, Nicholas Monsarrat, and C. S. Forester. Together with these, he condemns books of travel, exploration and real-life adventure such as *Kon-Tiki*. "The object seems to be," writes Holbrook, "to get on the side of the child by giving him matter about his own time, which perhaps, say, links up with a film." Why not? The child's desire for reading matter "about his own time" is a very real and understandable desire which we cannot ignore. Books of travel, exploration and adventure like *Kon-Tiki*, Arthur Grimble's *Pattern of Islands*, Alain Bombard's *The Bombard Story*, meet this need admirably and are surely well worth reading from a literary point of view.

I come finally to what I believe to be the underlying weakness of both *English in Education* and *English for Maturity*. Many of the contributors, and particularly David Holbrook, write with an urgent, almost desperate awareness of the powerful and evil influences at work on the minds of young people today. Holbrook writes of "a general deficiency in the positive living of us all" and "of an ugliness of spirit, a hopelessness, a deadly knowingness, for which our commercial popular culture and quality culture, too, can be seen to be directly responsible". Brian Jackson, in his introduction to *English in Education*, writes with obviously deliberate understatement, of "transmitting a cultural heritage in a world ever less ready to receive it". Progressive teachers everywhere will welcome the wealth of advice and experience in these two books for those struggling to combat the influence of a mass "popular culture". *But because none of the writers sees the social roots of this sickness of our time, they all place far too much emphasis on what can be done by teachers of English alone.* In his search for a way out of the terrible situation in which we find ourselves, Holbrook turns to a pseudo-psychological approach to the child (seen especially in his chapter *Making Things Up*) and a semi-mystical attitude to what he calls "the culture of the feelings" and the power of poetry as "a civilisation's positive hold on life". He does in fact, develop these attitudes at considerable length, but while profoundly disagreeing with him here, I have deliberately chosen to deal mainly with what is positive and helpful in his book.

Of course those of us involved in the teaching of English must strive unremittingly to give the children the best we can in prevailing conditions, and I believe that it is high time that Marxist teachers should discuss their ideas and experiences in this most difficult and complex field of English teaching. But as the crisis of capitalism develops, more and more teachers will come to see that it is no accident that children are being corrupted by powerful and insidious influences. The evils which so many rightly condemn have their roots deep in a society which is in its last stages of decay. This society in which our children are growing up is one framed not only to render them incapable of creative expression or of enjoyment of literature, but to prevent them from thinking seriously or intelligently about any of the problems facing Britain and the world today. In so far as they are allowed to think at all, they must think only in terms of the cold war and of anti-Communism.

Again and again, Holbrook poses the question, "How to live?" The battle for real literacy, for our cultural heritage, for the minds of our children and for life itself, *cannot be won in the classroom alone.* The work of dedicated teachers will be greatly strengthened when it is seen as part of the wider struggle for Socialism.

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Discussion contributions on :

What is Jazz?

Alfred Corum

THAT jazz has broken into *Marxism Today* is proof either of its importance or of a disproportionate estimate somewhere. Speaking purely for myself and not as editor of *Music and Life,* I would say the latter.

Laurie Green says jazz is "the improvised music of the Negro working class". In this it would be comparable to the folk music of Andalusia, Hungary, Scotland, etc., none of which would pretend to world influence such as is claimed for jazz by its devotees. But by the end of his note Green speaks of "this stirring *contemporary* music", thus showing that it has not developed in essentials over the past fifty years. In fact, some of the most successful people today are the parodists (Acker Bilk, the Temperance Seven).

We can agree that concert-hall music is in a dilemma, some of it dull, much of it incomprehensible to most (I speak of new music), yet I can give many examples of "stirring contemporary music": most of Bartok, the finale of Bush's Byron Symphony, Britten's *Peter Grimes.* The average jazz fan has probably never heard of them, let alone heard them, so is, therefore, not in a position to compare. And does he know Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces which, fifty years ago, exploited many of the instrumental devices since used in jazz?

Which brings me to my main criticism. Jazz musicians are so concerned with the way it is done that they neglect to ask what it is that they are doing. The range of feeling expressed by jazz is so restricted, principally physical exuberance and teenage love (usually frustrated), that the only way to get variety is to change the treatment. I would go so far as to say that practically no other human emotions can be expressed in jazz and all the anti-racist sentiments of the jazzman show precious little results in the actual music.

This concern with the way it is done is what is known as formalism and has been condemned in principle many times by Marxists when discussing art. If a jazz musician, or any musician, has something important to say, or even something not so very important, but of interest to him and to other people, the way it is said should result from what is to be said and, dialectically speaking, is part of it and yet can be separated from it. The idea should clothe itself in the appropriate garb. But when clothes become all important we have the situation in so much art today, and this, I am afraid, is the case with jazz. To illustrate my point I take Britten's *War Requiem.* The form of this is the Catholic Mass, with additions, but this fact is of relative unimportance compared to the anti-war message he wished to convey and the over-all impact.

As to the "hundreds of thousands of youngsters interested in jazz", Francis Newton came to the conclusion from his studies that jazz is now and has always been a minority interest, and, paradoxically, in the U.S.A. is practically non-existent in his sense. Pop music, now, with all its debased standards, is another matter and it is interesting to note that Soviet critics speak more often of pop or light music than of jazz in their discussions.

After a fairly long attempt to come to terms with jazz, including a good deal of listening, I am forced to the conclusion that most jazz discussion and criticism shows plain musical illiteracy. It is as if someone set up as an authority on English literature on the basis of an intense study of Edgar Wallace and Denis Wheatley, both highly professional writers but no Shakespeares. This illiteracy is understandable in a society where culture has been largely a perquisite of the "cultured" classes and where large sections of the working class still suspect it as something to do with the bourgeoisie. While in an agricultural and sea-faring society folk song arose as a spontaneous expression, in our industrial society we are subject to so many commercial influences that our "spontaneous" expression is largely determined by what other people provide us with.

If imitation Schoenberg and jazz were the only end products of two hundred years of musical development under capitalism, I would certainly say they were evidence of the end of the capitalist era. Luckily, the seeds of the new are in the womb of the old and for those who have ears to hear the era of great music is by no means over. But jazz can have only a minor part, by its very nature, to play in this rebirth.

My forthright views here expressed must not be taken to mean that the subject shall not be further discussed in the pages of *Music and Life.*

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